

SUBLIME HUMILITY

Exploring the Sublime
through large wearable objects

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Abstract

Sublime Humility explores the intergral relationship between theories of the sublime, humility and the body. The thesis examines this relationship between theories, concerning disability and the sublime, and physicality, involving human-animal hybrids and large objects. Overall, it portrays the representation of the sublime through artistic means as an overwhelming experience provoking pleasure and displeasure.

The thesis studies these subjects through the analysis of the artistic production, *Sublime Humility*, which took the form of two public Performances and an Exhibition, held at Aalto University, Finland in January 2020. *Sublime Humility*, the performance, experimented in the fusion of art, costume and stage design through large wearable objects. The performance involved three performers wearing three 'Object Legs', which were inspired by animal, human and fictitious forms, portraying dysfunctional bodies through a sculptural approach. The intention was to decentralise the human orientated perspective by reducing the performer to a body and appreciating the visual nature of a 'Large Object'.

The thesis asks, how could the sublime teach us humility? What happens when you extend the body and dissolve the ego? *Sublime Humility* sets out to investigate the function of the sublime, the use of the dysfunctional body and why a sense of humility could be beneficial. The analysis of these different subjects connects them together and provides the grounds from which a personal theory is proposed.

Together, the artistic production and written thesis answer these two questions, using two methodologies of Artistic practice as research. One methodology began with the thesis questions and from this point, relevant materials were gathered in the aim of answering them. The second methodology was led by my artistic practice, analysing the making process to find elements that were reoccurring.

The personal theory of this thesis proposes that the experience of the sublime can produce a feeling of humility, which can be of benefit. To experience the sublime is to encounter something that is physically or mentally greater than us. The encounter causes the viewer to feel physically small, in comparison to such large objects, and mentally overwhelmed, through the struggle to comprehend the forces at play. This experience produces a feeling of humility, which can be defined as a freedom from understanding the incomprehensible nature of the sublime. This strives towards humility as an ideal, because it can benefit individuals, through more personal satisfaction, and help those around, through an appreciation of their contribution to the world.

Keywords the sublime, body, humility, disability, object, animal, wearable art, posthumanism, scenography, costume design, body modification, ego.

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Introduction

This Master thesis does not stand alone from the rest of my work but is the next step in a long history of making objects, sculptures and performances that feel 'large'. It is an exploration of theories that have been derived from reoccurring themes within my artistic work. This thesis is the result of years of questioning, which has expanded my knowledge of some well-established theories. I believe this topic is important because of its reoccurrence and development throughout history and I use this thesis to contribute my own expertise. In August 2019, I began the artistic process of my Master thesis production, which culminated in January 2020 as a performance and exhibition named, *Sublime Humility*. This artistic production was the outcome of an interest into the theory of the sublime, known as a quality of greatness, whether physical or artistic, beyond measurement.¹ This interest stems from a lifetime of different experiences, where I felt overwhelmed but amazed while viewing natural beauties or powerful artworks.

The written component of this MA thesis reflects upon my artistic component, *Sublime Humility*, further discussing the ideas, process and theories that fuelled it. Using this, I answer my research questions and propose a personal theory. To serve these aims, I have documented *Sublime Humility* through written statements, audience feedback and photographs of the performance. I have carefully selected from these materials to support the theories and personal arguments in the following chapters. For example, I utilise quotes from the audience to assess the impact of the intended experience or how it differed and why.

The first chapter is used to describe the artistic project's process, including the concept, making of objects and use of space, and the result: the production and the effect on the audience. This allows the reader to understand the thesis production and the areas it focuses on when discussing the theories outlined in the remaining chapters.

The second chapter shall introduce the theory of the sublime, summarising its history, as I then provide my personal interpretation, conveying its link to the topic and other artworks. I continue from the theory of the sublime by connecting it to the concept of a 'Large Object'. This illustrates the potential of enlarging objects by referencing public artworks and performances, showing its impact on the audience.

The third chapter debates over the integral relationship between the sublime, body and humility. This introduces the parallels I have drawn between them, which provides the grounds for my personal theory. It discusses the body, its functionality and our perception of its dysfunctionality. I connect this to disability theory in contemporary art, to illustrate its definition and the impact it had

¹ 'Art and the Sublime', *Tate* [website], [no date], < <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/art-and-sublime>>, (accessed 18.9.19).

on the function and visual appearance of my thesis production. I continue from the discussion of the body onto the emotion humility where I introduce the philosophy that defines it through two case studies and my own personal interpretation. All three chapters are used to explain, expand upon and answer my thesis questions in order to propose a personal theory by drawing parallels between the body, art, humility and the sublime.

My findings and personal theory show that the experience of the sublime can be of benefit, by instilling a sense of humility within us. To experience the sublime is to encounter something that is physically or mentally greater than us but also provides insight into our true significance amongst the world. The encounter causes the viewer to feel physically small, in comparison to such large objects, and mentally overwhelmed, through the struggle to comprehend the forces at play. As a combination of pleasure and displeasure, I relate this experience to the notion, humility, which can be defined as a freedom from understanding the incomprehensible nature of the sublime. This aspect of humility dissolves the ego by detracting attention from the individual through a decentralisation process. This can be valuable as it can benefit people as individuals, through more personal satisfaction, and help those around, through an appreciation of their contribution to the world.

Personal Perspective and Motivation

I convey my perspective for the reader to understand my viewpoint when approaching these subjects. I see myself as a multifaceted person who works between design, art and the expanded fields of creativity and research, dealing with concepts, materials and the human experience. I believe that at the core of many creative people lies an interest in ideas, how we understand them, how they affect people and how we can utilise them to create an impact. This interest in ideas can be mediated through a variety of ways such as the creation of objects, performance works or writing. I use the creation of objects to mediate my ideas, which is portrayed through the form of performance or exhibitions. These portrayals can be experienced passively as an interpreter or actively as a participant. As a Visual artist, I have previously had to reflect upon and write about my artistic practice, by supplying a written statement. This statement contains some essential ideas at the core of my artistic practice and is presented below.

My key artistic aim is to explore ideas that can alter people's perception of themselves and the environment around them. Based upon research of philosophical, sociological and artistic theories, I utilise personal issues that fluctuate between existential thoughts and mundane incidents. My work can be portrayed through disjointed layers and different mediums.

I create interdisciplinary sets, exposing elements of narratives, in which protagonists inhabit surreal environments. These sets hint at both unsocial emotions and isolation of the creative mind in modern society. I intend for the audience to experience something that sits between the border of being healthy and feeling uncomfortable. My work attempts to confront the viewer, compelling them to reconsider their own thoughts. Using a method of self-reflection I explore personal experience to connect with a wider cultural understanding.²

My projects utilise diverse materials and include exhibitions, live events, public installations and stage performances. My work moves between visual arts and live arts as my role may be artist or scenographer. I broadly define Art, Performance and Design as a multidisciplinary practice that questions the systems around us and influences others.

As an artist, I am driven by personal unanswered questions or answers that have left me unsatisfied. I am motivated by a curiosity into complex interpretations of the world, and our advanced or even lack of understanding them. For example, my pursuit in understanding the theory of the sublime

² O. Dempsey, 'Statement', *Oscar Dempsey*, 2017, <<https://www.oscardempsey.com/works>>, (accessed 02.04.20).

comes from an interest in scale and size, whether it's the appreciation of design in architecture or the beauty in mountains. When I study these topics, something resonates within me, as it provokes a memory of something I have experienced in the past. I recall this experience but without having the words to illustrate its complexity. In understanding more about these topics, I am given some satisfaction in the comprehension of their issues. When I write about these issues, I wish to illustrate this comprehension, in the hope that others questioning them can gain a similar satisfaction or understanding. Being constantly perplexed by an ever changing world, I find solace in reading about where these topics have stemmed from. Although there is already a significant amount of research in the different subjects that I investigate, I hope to provide new insight. I contribute my insight by drawing parallels between these chosen subjects, supplying a personal perspective and additional comments.

Methodologies

‘Practice as research’ is a well-established approach to using creative performance and practice as a method of inquiry. It is reflected by a widespread ‘turn to practice’, involving a turning away from abstract theorising towards a more action-based investigation.³ I implement two main methodologies in my writing, based on artistic practices. The first methodology began with my two thesis questions and from there I started to collect relevant materials in the aim of answering them. The second methodology was led by my artistic practice, which involved the choice of materials and analysing the making process, to find elements that were key or reoccurring. For this thesis project, I used a combination of both methodologies and will later explain how this worked. First, I would like to introduce my two thesis questions, which are the pillars of research and analysis in this thesis. These two questions are deconstructed and explained through two subcategory questions within each one. Both questions will be referenced back to throughout the thesis to assist the reader in understanding my personal theory. **The answer to the first thesis question will explain what my personal theory is. The answer to my second thesis question will explain how I used this personal theory in *Sublime Humility*, the performance.**

1. How could the sublime teach us humility?

What is it about the theory and experience of the sublime that can impart humility?

What is this experience and why do I think it could benefit us?

2. What happens when you extend the body and dissolve the ego?

How does the extension of the body dissolve the ego?

What would this mean for performance and what reactions will this cause in the audience?

In addition to my thesis questions, I began this thesis project with a collection of ideas that embodied the concept, visual and purpose of the work. Using my thesis questions as the grounds for my research, the thesis ideas became the corners of my analysis framework. These ideas are also referenced throughout my thesis and are presented below.

What would happen if you extended a body’s limbs to the point that it was dysfunctional and unrecognisable, how would this *look*? What would *happen* if a person resembled an animal or fictitious character and was extremely large, how would this *work*?

³ B. Kershaw, ‘Practice as Research through Performance,’ in L. Fuschini, S. Jones, B. Kershaw and A. Piccini (eds.), *Practice-as-Research: In Performance and Screen*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009, p. 105-107.

Now that I have established the choice of methodologies and research questions, I describe the project's process briefly and chronologically. In order to inform these questions, I began theoretical research on the sublime, humility and the body which supplied me with information for the development. I was aware of theories on the sublime and body before my thesis questions had been decided. These theories have previously contributed to my past work but after acknowledging my questions, I pursued further research around humility. I conducted visual analysis by studying varied works from visual artists, costume and stage designers, which fuelled my visual consideration of the objects and performers. I was using this image based research to look for inspiration and information on how these designers and artists manifested their ideas. These stages of the process were more thought orientated as I was focused upon the concepts of these works, involving how they were portrayed and what potential they held. After this visual research, I wanted to manifest my ideas by beginning an initial design process of drawing and sketching, considering the Object's shape, material and colour. This period of designing was fairly open as I did not yet feel limited to size, functionality or even the physical possibility. I found this stage beneficial as it gave me a lot of freedom to convey some surreal concepts without the worry of how it could be made. After this, and in order to create these ideas, I entered a stage of research and discussion of potential materials. I began this by talking with experienced makers, technicians and undertaking my own investigation into materials. In these discussions, the main questions were, what possibilities did the materials hold, which material suited each individual idea and how were their properties dealt with? Some answers to these questions were found after choosing the materials, as I, or the makers around me, had previous experience dealing with them. However, other questions around unknown materials could only be answered through trial and error in the making process that followed.

Throughout this making process I felt myself lose focus of the concept's influence and instead followed a path of recreating my finished designs. For me, the concept of a project does not change much, as I follow relatively subconscious decisions and feel the materials find their place. This may not leave much room for change or experimentation, but I believe that if you start with a surreal idea, the challenge is in how to physically manifest it. I didn't consider what each Object meant or the ideas behind it, but rather how it *looked*. With the finished design in my head, I was able to manipulate the materials to their limit, in order to recreate this image. This was also a process of negotiation as I understood that I could not precisely replicate my design and that some areas should be left open for interpretation.

Throughout these periods of development, I was gathering data, beginning from the research and ending after the exhibition. This included writing informal notes before, during and after the

performance, and routinely photographing the development of the Objects. In the performance, I supplied feedback forms to the audience where they could answer different questions about their experience watching it. Although I do not use all of the data, it has helped me trace the progress and changing patterns of this project. These methods of gathering data by writing were produced mainly for later analysis but they also acted as documentation of the process. Although I was consciously writing these notes as an act of developing the art work, it only became apparent of how they could be utilised after the process was finished. At that point, I began to critically analyse all of the materials, whether it was research, informal writing or finalised art objects. From this analysis I could decide what impact the performance had on the audience and if it answered my thesis questions. Overall, I explored my chosen theories, created artistic objects and developed a performance that was based on my personal theory.

Terminology

I explain the main theories and terms that have been used and referenced throughout this thesis, which will be further expanded upon in the following chapters.

The sublime: This is defined as an 'enigmatic experience that involves our taking pleasure in being overwhelmed by sights, sounds, sensations or ideas that are larger, greater or more powerful than us, or otherwise threatening to us.'⁴ It is a theory that has been discussed for centuries by different artists, writers and philosophers in aesthetics. I consider the sublime in something overwhelming or large in which we derive an odd pleasure from our inability to grasp it, as it acts upon our understanding of scale. I interpret the sublime through our different experiences of viewing art, man-made structures and nature.

Humility: This is defined as 'freedom from pride or arrogance, the quality or state of being humble' and having a modest view of your own importance.⁵ I interpret humility as an experience that could be considered as feeling small. Rather than implicating that this experience is negative, I consider it through an understanding of something larger. This can lead one to have a more realistic view of oneself amongst the world.

The body: This is defined as the main part of an animal body or plant, as the torso is usually distinguished from head and limbs.⁶ I discuss the body and its appearance in fluctuation between human, animals and other phenomena, as a site of inspiration and creation. I use the body as visual stimulus, considering its organic colours, shapes and textures. I also focus on the function of a body including our interpretation of its movement.

'Dys/functional': This is characterized by abnormal functioning or displaying dysfunction, such as not behaving normally.⁷ I discuss both the 'body' and 'dysfunctionality' together and separately, as I relate them to disability theory.

In addition to the key theoretical terms sublime, humility, the body and dysfunctionality, I refer to other terms and subjects such as 'Object Legs', Wearable Art, body extensions and the ego. These terms are defined and explained below.

⁴ D. Freeman, 'Sublime: the pleasure of the overwhelming', *Art Gallery of NSW*, 2014, <<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/calendar/sublime/>>, (accessed 18.3.19).

⁵ 'Humility', *Merriam-Webster* [website], 2020, <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humility>>, (accessed 18.03.19).

⁶ 'Body', *Merriam-Webster* [website], 2020 <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/body>>, (accessed 11.03.20).

⁷ 'Dysfunctional', *Merriam-Webster* [website], 2020, <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dysfunctional>>, (accessed 11.03.20).

'Object Legs': This is the name I gave for the wearable items in my artistic production. It demonstrates the combination of sculpture, visually representing a form, and legs, as functioning limbs to stand or walk with. An 'object' is an open and abstract word that can portray any material thing that can be seen or touched, whether it's a prop, device or entity. This term helps me categorise this type of work in my project as a multidisciplinary practice between costume, performance design and visual arts.

Wearable art: 'Wearable art is not only worn but it also has an intention of its creation to be accepted as a serious and unique artistic statement.'⁸ I understand this term through a sculptural perspective, where an object can be made or designed for the body but is not limited to function, size or considerate wearability. It could be a walking sculpture, using hard or constructive materials, where the appearance takes higher priority over function.

'Extending the body': Body extension and body modification is recognised in performance art through sensory awareness and surroundings. I define this term as the physical extension of body's limbs through material, to transfer movement between extension and the body. This concept can also be related to surgical body enhancement, alternative limbs and prosthesis.

'Dissolving the ego': The ego is defined as a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance. Your ego is your conscious mind and the part of your identity that you consider your 'self.'⁹ I associate this word with a less human orientated performance. This proposes a shift of attention from the performer, termed as ego, onto the art, termed as object. In this thesis, I use the performer as an example of a character or ego.

'Large Object': This is the term for my personal concept of an object_having more potential when larger. The definition of 'Large' is 'of considerable or relatively great size, extent, or capacity'.¹⁰ When I state a Large Object, it refers to any object being or becoming bigger but I mostly relate this term to objects involved in art and performance.

⁸ 'What is Wearable Art?' *Did you know Fashion* [website], 2020, <<https://didiyouknowfashion.com/what-is-wearable-art/>>, (accessed 01.04.20).

⁹ 'Ego', *Lexico* [website], 2020, <<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/ego>>, (accessed 01.04.20).

¹⁰ 'Large', *Lexico* [website], 2020, <<https://www.lexico.com/definition/large>>, (accessed 02.05.20).

Artistic Production Details

Sublime Humility is the name of my artistic production and MA written thesis. The name was created from the theories and emotions that influenced this work. *Sublime Humility* took the form of two public performances showing on the 27th and 28th of January 2020, and an exhibition running from the 29th January until the 5th February 2020. The project's working group was small, consisting of Design students and performers from a dance and circus background. The team included myself, as Director and Designer, three performers, Verna Laine, Laura Humppila and Sanni Reilin, one sound designer, Atte Kantonen and one performance assistant, Elina Ström. The performances and exhibition were held in Väre Lobby of Aalto University, Espoo, Finland and experimented in the fusion of art, costume and stage design through large wearable objects. The event showcased my 'Object Legs', three wearable items which I designed and created for the three performers in my production. The three Object Legs took inspiration from animal, human and fictitious bodies portraying limb extensions, disproportionate muscles and natural terrains through a sculptural approach. Through sheer scale, these objects were intended to embody a sense of power but also become undermined throughout the performance by our interpretation of dysfunctionality.



Chapter One

Sublime Humility

In the realm of Performance, it can feel that the roles are more easily separated, as stage and costumes can be created in collaboration between the Designer and the Maker. In the realm of Visual Arts, the roles feel a little more blurred, as the artist may be responsible for the design and creation. I decided to work on an independent project where I could act as Designer and Director, rather than a collaborative project, where I would have acted as scenographer for an existing production. I chose to work on an independent project that would be the main contributing factor to my written, for two reasons. The first was that I could pursue my artistic ideas and questions as the driving force of my thesis. The second was to showcase the role of art, stage and costume as the focal point of the production instead of the performer, narrative or text.

I began this process with initial ideas, which I had been already been considering for two years since I started my Masters degree. For me, this Master thesis was the perfect opportunity to execute and explore these ideas. This project was the next step in creating something 'large' that was in relation to the human body. The body and its comparison to artwork, stage and costume, is an immense contributing factor to my artwork and goals. The topic of 'process' is discussed a lot in the designer and artistic community, in regards to what methods we use, our approach to making work and what this means for our network. I shall address this issue even if is widely acknowledged. The research and making process of this Master thesis has been similar to my previous projects, in making art and designing stages, since I started over ten years ago in 2010. I begin with a strong idea and visual appearance, and then aim to execute what was in my mind from the start of the process.

Pre-Performance Process

Ideas and Objects

I believe there are two main themes that run throughout this production and thesis. The first is the theory of the sublime and how I relate this to a 'Large Object'. The second is the body, its dys/functionality and how I relate this to the notion of humility. In the following chapters, I expand upon the two themes as theories and concepts by referencing other writers, philosophers and artists. The discussion creates parallels between the subjects, which answers my thesis questions and informs my personal theory. I was motivated in selecting these writers, philosophers and artists as references, to further explore my chosen subjects and provide an opportunity to consider them from a more philosophical approach.

Considering the designs and ideas of the three Object Legs, I knew the first pair was going to be a large, hind leg figure, taking inspiration from the bodies of animals such as dogs and. This idea came from a previous interest in animal-like figures and creatures that could be a combination of human and animal horses (see Fig. 1). I desired something that appeared large but felt weak, which I imagined as over accentuated but undermined by its disproportionate nature. I pictured stilt walker performers and recognised the power of changing a human's silhouette by providing sculptural possibilities. For this object, the material and colour was initially unclear but I considered something shiny that could appear almost unnatural.

In contrast to these first pair of legs, I pictured the second pair as being more human, bulging and appearing almost absurd. These descriptions naturally lent themselves to the use of inflatables, as I could perceive the human form being a caricature (see Fig. 2). With these Object Legs, I related the inflation and deflation of an object to our views of functionality and failure in the body. This piece also critiqued society's current obsession with female bodies having large hips and bottoms. Having worked with inflatables before, I knew which materials I could use and this created the parameters for its shape, colour and texture.

The third Object Legs were more undefined at the beginning of this project, as I imagined a mass of natural terrain being embodied but also engulfing a person. These ideas connoted a sense of nature, which I connected to the theory of the sublime. The theory of the sublime can be experienced when viewing vast oceans, mountains and other extreme natural beauties. I wanted to feel that the performer was a mountain, so this idea of shape took priority throughout the development of this work. I did not view the third Object Legs as human or animal, as noted in the previous legs, but rather as a performer wearing an inanimate object (see Fig. 3).

In the end of this process, I noticed an interesting dissonance between the concept and materials. All of the Object Legs started from ideas of living or organic beauties, whether bodies or nature. However, all objects were formed from man-made materials, such as plastic tubes and nylon tent fabric, which portrayed an unnatural and fake aesthetic. This created an interesting paradox, for example, the animal's body appeared shiny, the human's body became deflated and the mountainous body was two dimensional. After speaking with the audience members and performers, I gained certain impressions from them about each object. The first object was described as sculptural, bold and disturbing but produced a certain sense of body manipulation. The second object was described as simple, royal-like with references to a period costume hoop skirts and also pretty but pathetic. The third object was defined as solid, moss, a butterfly, awkward and similar to a glacier.

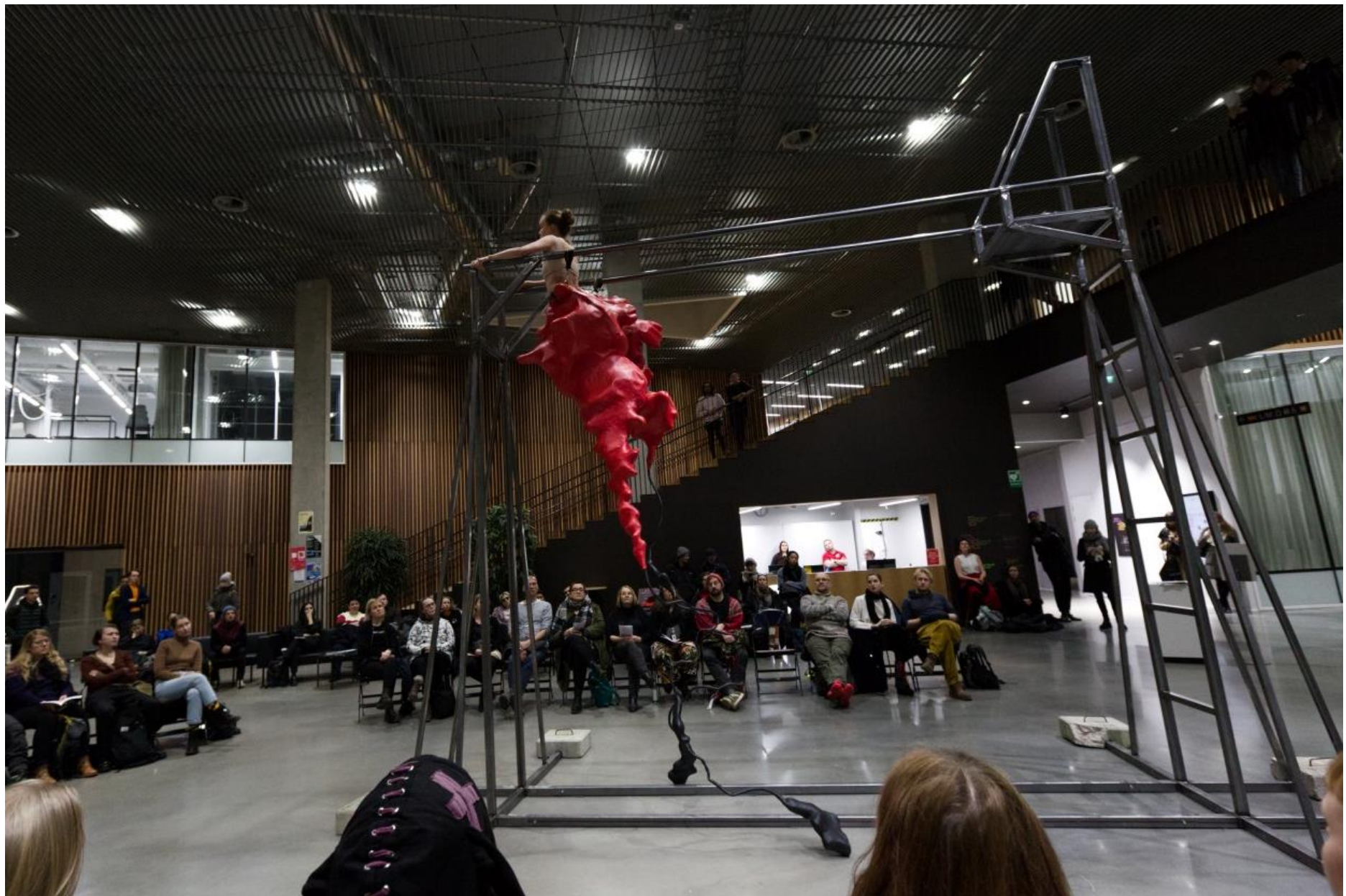


Fig. 1. *Sublime Humility 2020, Object Legs 1*. This was the final result of my design and was made from 'Fosshape', plastic tubes and a surface treatment of filler, paint and varnish.



Fig. 2. *Sublime Humility 2020, Object Legs 2*. This was the final result of my design and was made from nylon ripstock tent fabric, computer fans and a 12V battery.



Fig. 3. *Sublime Humility* 2020, Object Legs 3. This was the final result of my design and was made from plastic tubes, filter fabric and a surface treatment of latex, paint and filler.

Making process

The artistic project was an attempt at working in fluctuation between the fields of visual arts and live arts, with a focus on design, concept and material. During this process, I felt my role move between artist, maker, director, costume designer and stage designer. In this project I had the opportunity to work with many experienced technicians, making use of the university's equipment and tools as I explored new materials. This combination of knowledge and equipment helped me figure out how the Object Legs could work, as large scale pieces worn by performers from a great height. In this process, I understood that each material held certain limits and that there would be compromises in recreating the finished designs. In this project, my biggest challenge was entering the realm of costume design and costume making. I am not an experienced seamstress and I did not consider my work as very wearable, but it was insightful to watch the approach of a seamstress when making work. In this regard, I had limited experience but I became aware of the areas to be considered when creating work for the body. I think specifically, challenges arose because I was creating larger forms, based on animals and fictitious characters, for a human body to wear. These larger, abstract forms caused problems for the human body, as the performers had to navigate something that was different to their compatible size, comfort and function. In specific areas of the making process, I felt like a sculptor working as a costume designer, trying to coerce more three dimensional, harder materials into pliable fabric. I placed the Object Legs costumes into the category of Sculpture and tried to make them fit. By using more rigid materials as opposed to lighter fabrics, I wanted to create wearable sculptures and not costumes. When creating any work for the body, there is a lot to consider such as the movement, fit and safety of the performer. At times this added restraint to my usual process of making art, where size and weight could be limitless. However, this project aimed at experimenting in the field of wearable art, as I wanted to create a piece of art for the body that functioned in performance. Overall, these different issues impacted many decisions throughout the making process, considering its appearance, function, size and material.

The Stage

The idea for the stage piece was formed from the realisation that the performers could not stand on or be supported by the Object Legs. By intention, when worn the Object Legs could be moved and insinuate 'walking', but they would not support the performer's weight. This performance decision provided an association to people who were physically challenged or had reduced mobility. From this association, I considered physiotherapy and movement aids. These different movement devices are used to improve people's walking pattern, balance or safety while being mobilised

independently.¹¹ They can also be a means of transferring weight from the lower body to the upper body through the frames support from the ground. I was most inspired by 'Parallel Bars' which are used for exercise and physical therapy in 'gait training'. They consist of two metal bars connected to the ground that are parallel to each other, allowing one person to pass through it while they use the bars to support their weight. This assists them to re-learn to walk as well as regain balance, strength and mobility. The action and appearance of these acts informed the concept of the stage and performer's movements. I studied a variety of these devices and enjoyed the dissonance between the caring act of assistance and the harsh texture of the metal bars. This information and visual reference was very important for the aesthetics of the stage, as it inspired the material, concept and shape. The stage functioned as a support for the performers so that it was possible for them to wear the tall Object Legs and walk with them. As trained circus performers they had experience in operating themselves at elevated heights, while being supported by harnesses. Because of the aspects detailed above, the stage piece was continually developed, to make it possible for the dancers to mount the stage piece and perform with their Object Legs. It went through numerous changes in size and shape due to these requirements. However, the stage retained its main intention of elevating the performers while supporting them. In addition to being a supportive device, the stage was also the visual framework that connected the Object Legs and performers to the space. The stage was a constant throughout the performance and was the only way that the dancers could 'perform' with their Object Legs. After the public performances were over, the stage was used as an installation in the exhibition, where it was also used to display one pair of the Object Legs. After a finalised design, the stage was made in a way that it could remain stable while not being connected to the ground. It provided the correct support, so that the performers could remain connected by carabiners and harnesses, ensuring their safety. Overall, the stage appeared simple and minimal due to the metal material remaining unpolished and uncoloured. This created visual connections to more industrial structures such as construction scaffolding.

¹¹ 'Walking Aids', *Physiopedia*, 2020, <https://www.physio-pedia.com/Walking_Aids>, (accessed 26.03.20).

Performance Elements

Choreography

An extensive part of this process was used to create the objects but periods of time were also dedicated to the performance logistics, by organising the choreography, sound and spatial arrangement. During the testing period with the performers, the stage was located in the Wood workshop of Otakaari 7, Aalto University, due to its size. The group was able to rehearse there with the objects to understand movement possibility, harness safety and performer arrangement. The choreography was organised in collaboration between me and the performers to see how the objects affected their movement. Each performer interpreted their objects differently and this was reflected through their movement styles, which ranged from doubtful to determined and strained. The arrangement of the performance was simple as there were three objects and three performers. Each performer would take their turn, to climb up the stage ladders, 'walking' back and forth and then take off their Object Legs to climb back down. As an attempt to dissolve the ego of the performer, the production was void of text and speech, as I wanted the focus to remain on the objects and materials. I imagined the performance in the form of a catwalk presentation to show the performers not as characters but for the identity of them to be orientated around the objects. When discussing plans with the sound designer we considered associations and feelings that could be imagined for the soundscape. I described the feeling of being overwhelmed, which was reflected by organ music, and being in the presence of something larger, which was associated to whale noises. I believe this eclectic ambience was achieved in the sound environment and I describe its impact on the audience later in the thesis.

Public Space and Curiosity

There were many determining factors for the site of this project, such as location and cost, but I was mostly concerned with the context and size of the space. Before I discuss this choice further, I want to briefly introduce my understanding of space. By definition, space can be 'the unlimited or incalculably great three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur.'¹² When defining the areas related to space that were relevant for this thesis, I considered the aesthetics, size and scale. There are many visual references in any given space, such as its contents, style and colour, which can be indicative of its time, location and culture. These design decisions are the visual backdrop and context for any artistic or performative event. When

¹² 'Space', *Dictionary* [website], 2020, <<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/space?s=t>>, (accessed 30.03.20).

establishing the space, it is important to ask, is the space for the performance, which can be defined as 'site-specific', or is the performance for the space, which is understood as black box theatre.

As a student project, I was searching within the parameters of sites that I could access through the University's allocated spaces. These spaces included white cube galleries, a black box stage and lobbies or corridors for exhibition. I was able to book the Lobby on Level 1 of Väre Building in Aalto University as the location for my performance and exhibition. I chose this space due to its height, size and spatial arrangement as a 'lobby' at the entrance to the university. The interior of the lobby consisted of materials such as concrete, metal bars, glass windows and bright lighting fixtures. This connoted an industrial space similar to a factory due to its size, lofty ceiling and spacious feeling, with different levels drawing attention to its spatial qualities.

In my practice I greatly consider public spaces, public events and their effect on the artwork or audience. As someone who works between the disciplines of stage design and visual arts, I believe public artwork and site-specific installations hold a variety of possibilities for inspiration, influence and critique. I am fascinated by the context of a 'non-art' environment and how an artwork can affect or disrupt the patterns of the public. I recognise how the artwork can play with the dynamics of mundane sites and also consider what materials could be contrasted with everyday aesthetics. Due to a short booking period allowance, my time in Väre Lobby involved intense and focused work. In this period of preparation, performance and exhibition, I was able to note some reactions from the audience, in how the performance functioned in that space.

The Väre building of Aalto University was designed by Verstas Architects and officially opened in autumn 2018. Väre holds 9 exhibition areas, including 2 white cube spaces, and 7 lobby or corridor spaces. In 2019, there were 115 scheduled space bookings in Väre. This included 75 exhibitions, 17 learning or cultural related events, 6 design related thesis work, 4 workshops, 4 MA and BA related course works, 2 competition displays, 1 Gala Ball, 1 product launch, 1 voting station, 1 filming, 1 festival, 1 technology related event and 1 performance event. From this study, we can perceive these different spaces are used extensively for exhibition or design related events but not to the same extent for performing arts. In any institution or school, Performance can bring a much-needed sense of spectacle and 'liveness' to the space. Since Väre is perceived as the Arts and Design School of Aalto University, it is especially important to feel that art and performance students are being represented there. After each of my productions in the Lobby area and during informal discussions, people commented on their surprise and enjoyment that a performance was brought to this space. I think this demonstrates the enjoyment, demand and potential for future performance and live

events in this and other schools. It can provide insight into the students work, visual inspiration and points for open discussions.

Holding this performance and exhibition within a busy public space, inside an education institution, gathered a lot of attention that caught the gaze of passers-by. In this context, 'passers-by' is the term for a person or group of people that are passing through a space without the intention to stop or witness performance or art. However, people were naturally curious of the events inside this space and spent time there to locate its purpose.

Below are quotes from different audience members in the feedback forms that were provided during the performance (see appendix. 1 for full feedback forms):

What did you experience while watching this?

- 'It was surprising, weird and wonderful! Takes my mind to animal cruelty also.'
- 'Wonderful drama involving a lot of tension. Super Design.'

What did you think of the combination of performer and objects?

- 'Unique, new, generates ideas.'
- 'Warmth, endearment, being, amusement.'

As the audience members testify, *Sublime Humility*, the performance created curiosity through a sense of oddity that added tension. This made people stop, discuss and seek out more information to grasp its content. Even when I began installing the stage and fixing parts, I had 'activated' the stage and began what could be interpreted as something 'live'.

Audience Viewing

During the performance, some audience members avoided the seating area, which consisted of a line of single seats in an open-ended oval ring, close to the stage. Technically, this seating area was viewed 'on stage', as part of the performance and viewed alongside the performers. This caused some audience members to choose sitting on the lobby's sofas, which were backed against the walls of the space and further from the stage. In addition to this, the passer-by viewers stopped at any point they were walking, to temporarily stand and view the performance. For example these members stood and viewed the performance from the stairs, the balcony or the different corridors that surrounded it. By choice, the passers-by remained firmly as the viewer and not as a participant of the performance. I believe this created three layers in the periphery of the performance, this was

the performers on stage, the seated audience viewing this and the passers-by who could view everything. Even during the exhibition when there were no performers or live elements, people naturally walked around the stage, as to not interrupt or accidentally become part of a performance unknown to them. The exhibition displayed objects that were loaded with a sense of movement but I think the strongest visual cue came from the stage piece which held ladders and an elevated platform, suggesting potential for people to climb. This potential for public voyeurism was also complimented by the different layers of viewing this space. Because of its location and spacious feeling, the lobby was seen from the two sets of stairs adjacent to it, the balcony above it, the various corridors that lead to it and the office rooms looking onto the area (see Fig. 4). These different layers of viewing enabled various perspectives of scale similar to an arena. The audience were either looking up at the objects that were larger than them, or viewing from an ariel perspective to see the stage tower over the audience. I believe this relates to the sublime experience in viewing something overwhelming, even if mediated by a safe distance, and using other people as a reference point of scale.



Fig. 4. *Sublime Humility* 2020, Performance Viewing. These show the different levels at which the performance could be viewed from, including the staircase, office, seating areas and corridors.

Post-Performance Concepts

Time

During a lecture from Costume Designer, Marta Jimenez Salcedo, I asked her what she considered the biggest difference between performance in public areas and stages. She replied, 'Time'. Although this notion was not the core element of my artistic production, 'time' in a public performance can be the defining factor. Starting from when the audience enters, to when the piece has begun or finished, time can be the main context in which that work is interpreted. *Sublime Humility*, the performance, was approximately forty minutes, starting from when the sound piece began and ending when our group walked back onto the stage. As mentioned before, I decided from the beginning that there would be no established narrative or story. Although there was a beginning and end, I wanted to create a piece that people could enter at any point and grasp something, without knowing its background. Each object was different and did not require the audience to see what came before or after. However, as a public piece that had seating and a starting time, my artistic production was not a durational piece. As a director, I became extremely aware of the audience's attention span, for example, how much they could watch or would wish to stay. I felt I had to cater to their needs while letting the piece take its natural course. Time can also define the difference between performance and exhibition, as something that is 'live' is limited to a fixed time, while an exhibition is 'static', which can be viewed over a longer period. An Exhibition is normally organised so the viewer can spend as little or as much time on any given piece, according to their interest. A performance can be more demanding of your attention as you normally get one chance to view its actions. In exhibitions, the experience is more dictated by the viewer, through how much time or thought they are willing to give to the piece. In this case, the more time or concentration one gives to a work, the more thought or entertainment one receives. In opposition to this, performance can be a little more direct and easier for the viewers to be able to sit back and receive the entertainment, choosing to consider the content or not.

Scale, tension and danger causing struggle, anxiety and sympathy

When informally talking with viewers of the performance, reoccurring issues came up, including a sense of anxiety, tension and danger. These issues were also reflected upon in the audience feedback forms. I relate this combination of feelings to the theory of the sublime and the notion of humility, as the audience portrayed an experience that was larger than them, through concept and size. This caused a mixture of emotions, including a balance between tension and enjoyment. I

believe this balance of feelings left the audience feeling small but in awe, as they created emotional ties between themselves and the performers. This experience was partly intended and I believe it derived from three core elements. The first was the size of the stage, causing a feeling of being overwhelmed, and the appearance of the stage, portraying a more brutal quality. The second element came from viewing the performers on top of the stage, causing people to worry for their safety and imagining themselves in that position. The third came from the sound elements, which was derived from the audio piece and the performers as they struggled to manoeuvre their large objects. These layers of sounds created an overall tense environment, adding to the other two elements and general atmosphere. I believe these three elements mixed together well to keep the audience intrigued while also feeling safe and submissive. This experience of danger can be similarly recognised through the enjoyment of circus and acrobatic works, where audience members view people in life-threatening situations. When analysing the performance, I could distinguish which reactions were intended and what was left open to interpretation. Similar to a rollercoaster, the scale of the stage created an overwhelming feeling, while the minimal nature of its structure made it appear more unstable. I was surprised by the combination of sounds and performers, which I discovered produced heightened feelings of suspense and anxiety. Below are quotes from different audience members in the feedback forms that were provided during the performance:

What did you experience while watching this?

- 'There was a lot of tension in the atmosphere, feeling that the performers were struggling while trying to move.'

How did the scale (size) of the works affect your experience?

- 'I felt very aware and weird in my own body.'
- 'The emotions arose from scale and the effort required for movement.'

The performers utilised the universal movement of 'walking' and as the audience members testify, it permitted them to relate to the performer's pain. This sympathy stemmed from the audience watching the performers' struggle, while being supported by weak, breaking or deflating legs. During the performance, pain appeared on the performers' faces, which was caused by the shifting of weight between their body and the Object Legs, revealing conflict in their upper bodies. The Object Legs 3 triggered a stifling movement, as if the performer was stuck. The inflexibility and squeaking noises added to its unstable nature that undermined its concept of embodying a mountain. Overall, I believe this created an inner conflict within the audience member to see another person struggle

and not be able to do anything about it. In relation to this act, I can recognise the same experience within public crowd interactions. For example, people may struggle to watch others who are disabled, movement impaired, mentally unstable or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The people viewing may be immobilised between empathy, sympathy and a sense of self-preservation. The viewer may become highly aware of their own status and concerned of crossing such invisible social barriers, by deciding to assist them or not. I perceive this public experience as something out of the ordinary and emotionally overwhelming, similar to the experience of the sublime. I believe it can cause people to be aware and grateful for their own mobility, which then manifests as feeling humility. I discuss this notion of humility further in Chapter three.

The Body and dissolving the ego.

While being in dialogue with the audience members, people seemed comfortable in discussing their emotional response. However, I felt there was a lack of feedback upon the visual and conceptual nature of the performance. I did receive one email from a professor at the university who commented upon the performance as, 'surreal, post-humanistic, jungle to apocalypse to circus art to wild imagination views.'¹³

I interpreted this comment as a recognition of the complexity and confusion of the performance. The comment brings up the theory of Post-Humanism, which by one definition is stated as 'a set of ideas that have been emerging since around the 1990s, challenges the notion that humans are and always will be the only agents of the moral world'.¹⁴ In relation to this theory, philosopher, Ted Schatzki, suggests there are two varieties of post-humanism of the philosophical kind:

One, which he calls 'objectivism', tries to counter the overemphasis of the subjective or intersubjective that pervades humanism, and emphasizes the role of the nonhuman agents, whether they are animals and plants, or computers or other things...A second priority practices, especially social practices, or individual subjects, which they say, constitute the individual.¹⁵

I associate these comments with the decentralisation of humans, to the theory of the sublime. Although the experience of the sublime is orientated around the human figure, I recognise it in the

¹³ M. Loukola, comment from an email conversation, 2020.

¹⁴ 'Ethics Explainer: Post-Humanism', *The Ethics Center*, 2018, <<https://ethics.org.au/ethics-explainer-post-humanism/>>, (accessed 3.4.20)

¹⁵ 'Posthumanism: Philosophical', *nerri.eu* [website], 2020, <<https://www.nerri.eu/posthumanism/>>, (assessed 03.04.20).

recognition of the 'other', which prompts the viewer to shift focus from themselves onto the 'other', whether it is object, animal or nature. Referring to my thesis questions, I want to expand upon the question, how does the extension of the body dissolve the ego? The intention of this production was to dissolve the ego, by detracting attention from the performer and onto the object. I define the term 'dissolving the ego', in relation to a less person or character orientated performance. This is a proposal for performance to focus more on the art, material and its aesthetics. I believe many performances works can be human orientated and by definition 'live works' are based upon a person in action. My goal is not to subtract the person from the scene, but to question what happens when the attention is moved away from the performer and onto an object. For example, this can be understood through a fashion catwalk presentation, where the model is present to show the garment and bring it to life. They are a part of the presentation but not the centre of attention, so the viewer's interest can remain on the concept, design and material of the item. In relation to this, I introduce quotes from different audience members in the feedback forms that were provided during the performance:

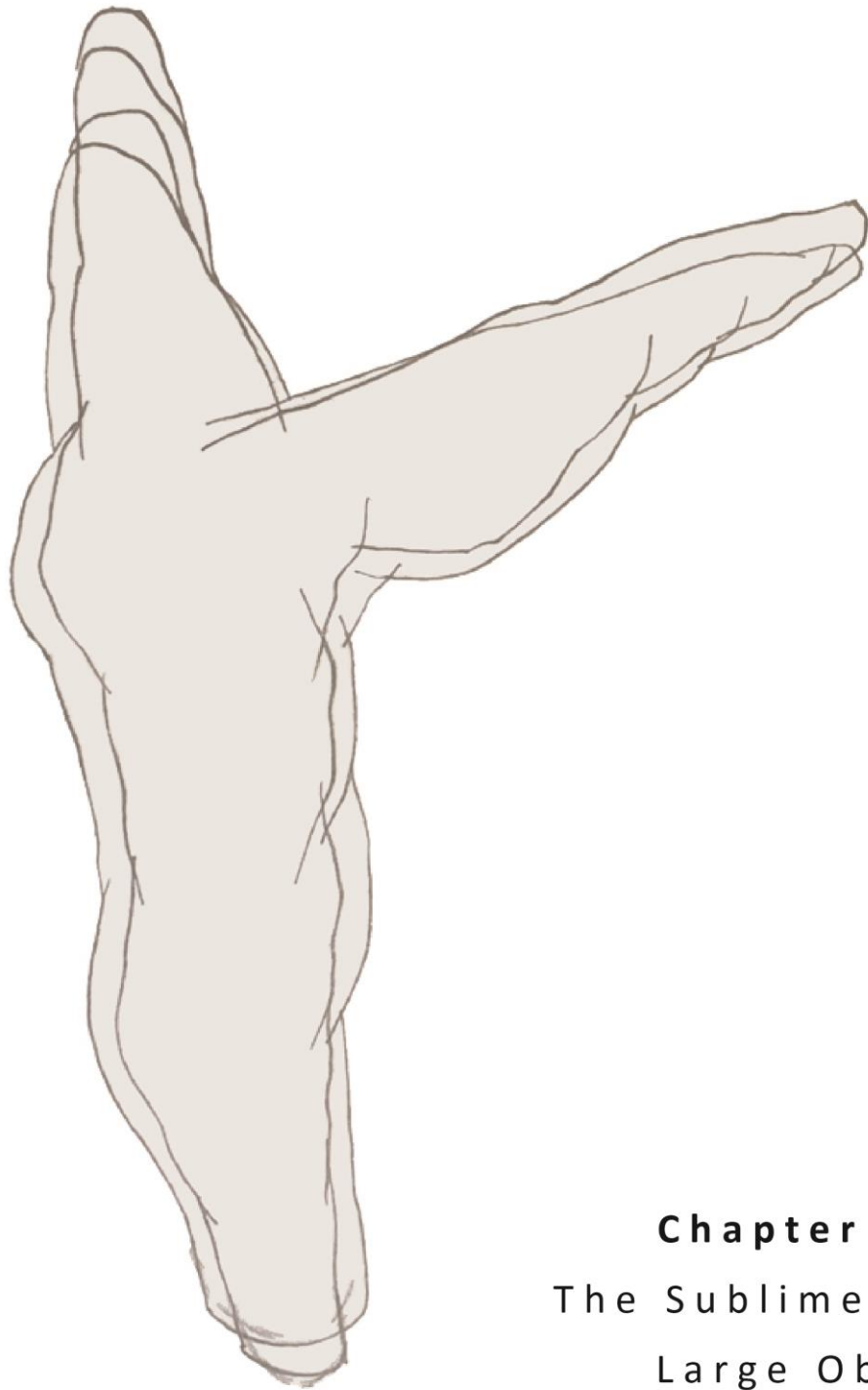
What did you think of the combination of performer and objects?

- 'They worked so well with each other. The performers and objects were two separate things, but suddenly melted into a whole new being.'
- 'The movement was really interesting, how it required a lot of effort, but was still delicate, almost walking on tiptoes. Very inspiring, thank you!'
- 'Super associative performance- it took me/my mind to nature document[ary] to being a miniature insect in a jungle to images of post-war! Food for surreal imagination! Well done, thanks.'

As the audience members testify, their attention fluctuated between object and performer, as the relationship between the two became more interwoven through action. I believe the surreal aesthetics caused strange associations, which ranged from jungles to animals outside of a human realm. Through a reversal of size, the costumes were larger than the performers, which enabled the audience to focus on the movement and appearance of the Object Legs. Other performance decisions supported this attempt to dissolve the ego, including a minimal approach to the performer's upper body, simple makeup and hair styling. It was my intention to dissolve the ego of the performer but in the performance, I could recognise the focus of the audience shifting between object and performer. Overall, the audience had the chance to see the objects combined with the performers and separate as art pieces, displayed on exhibition. For example when separated, the

object was an object and the performer was a person, and when combined, the performer was dissolved into the object, as they both required each other.

In summary, this chapter has presented *Sublime Humility*, the performance, through the description of its concepts, audience feedback information and image documentation. This was for the reader to understand the artistic component of this Master thesis before delving further into the written component. Now that this has been established, the thesis can delve into the subjects and theories that have driven this artistic production. In the next two chapters I will expand upon theories of the sublime, body and humility to answer my thesis questions and further inform my personal theory.



Chapter Two
The Sublime and the
Large Object

Chapter two explores and expands upon theories of the sublime, which I use to illustrate my notion of a 'Large Object', the concept of things having more potential when larger. I contribute my personal interpretation of these subjects, in which I further answer my thesis questions. One thesis question addresses the potential benefits of the sublime experience and I believe the expansion of the theory of the sublime answers this question. As mentioned in the terminology, this theory has been debated for centuries by different artists, writers and philosophers. Currently, it covers a multitude of areas, dealing with different aspects, such as the Dynamical Sublime, Industrial Sublime and the Contemporary Sublime. I reference selected writers, such as Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, Julian Bell and Mojca Kuplen, to explain the different areas of this theory. I analyse different aspects of the theory of the sublime, including a sense of scale, nature, artwork and fear. This information supports my personal theory, which consists of drawing parallels between the sublime, humility and the body. I continue from the sublime to discuss the concept of a Large Object, referencing public art and performance such as statues and puppets. I have chosen to expand upon this notion of a Large Object, as it concerns the feature of scale in the sublime, which is essential in my written thesis and artistic production. I introduce an overview of the history of the sublime, focusing on my chosen areas, for the reader to understand its changes through the development of philosophical ideas and art movements.

An Overview of the Sublime

In relation to art and philosophy, the theory of the sublime has covered a vast amount of history, taking on many interpretations and changes throughout different art movements. I do not discuss all of these changes, but rather introduce specific areas, explaining my interpretation and how each movement has influenced my work. Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant are the two writers and philosophers who made the most recognised contributions to this theory. These contributions were considered the most influential treatises on the topic, with writers still referencing these works today. I discuss their contributions and continue from this, on to later notions of the sublime, including the influence of nature, the Contemporary Sublime and art evoking the sublime. In the third chapter, I use this information to discuss how the sublime experience could impart humility and benefit us, as viewers. Overall, I believe it is useful for the reader to understand how the sublime experience works, to recognize its connections with *Sublime Humility*, the performance.

In the 18th Century, Edmund Burke developed his analysis of sublimity in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757.¹⁶ He was the first to argue that sublimity and beauty were mutually exclusive, as his concept was a contrast to the classical conception of the aesthetic quality of beauty being the pleasurable experience.¹⁷ Burke's development suggested that the sublime could also evoke horror and ugliness. His work was notable for its focus on the sublime's physiological effects through a duality of the emotions, fear and attraction. In relation to the sublime's impact on the viewer, Burke contends that self-preservation is most capable of making an impression on the mind.¹⁸ Defined as protection of oneself from harm or death, it can be a key sublime experience because it is instigated by terror. For example self-preservation can be our emotional response when viewing a dangerous event, even if mediated by physical distance. If this response to terror is not carried to a physical form of harm, then this experience is capable of producing delight, a kind of tranquillity tinged with terror.¹⁹

I find these interpretations from Burke helpful in explaining our understanding of fear and pleasure. This can be applied to our experience of art or performance, where pleasure does not necessarily rely on something that is aesthetically beautiful but can also be derived from something that evokes fear. This is one element and tactic that I employed in *Sublime Humility*, the performance, by using fear as a tool. According to my feedback forms, the audience experienced fear and empathy when they witnessed another person, the performer, in danger. However, I believe the audience were also able to derive some pleasure from this, as a life affirming experience. This element of self-preservation is directly linked to the sublime, as things that do not actually harm us can produce a similar but positive sensation. Burke's interpretation can also be used to clarify our reactions when viewing a powerful artwork that is limited by size, such as a painting. Although the artwork is not physically larger than us, we can understand what ideas are implied and this has the capacity to produce a sublime experience. This concept of art representing the sublime is further discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁶ 'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful', *Wikipedia* [website], 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Philosophical_Enquiry_into_the_Origin_of_Our_Ideas_of_the_Sublime_and_Beautiful>, (accessed 04.03.20).

¹⁷ 'Sublime (philosophy), Modern Philosophy, Burke', *Wikipedia* [website], 2020, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sublime_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sublime_(philosophy))>, (accessed 04.03.20).

¹⁸ L. Wixley Brooke, 'Damien Hirst and the sensibility of shock', *The Contemporary Sublime: Sensibilities of transcendence and shock*, edited by Nicola Hodges, Page 55. London, John Wiley and Sons, 1995.

¹⁹ E. Burke, 'SECT. VII. EXERCISE, A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful, 1729-1797', *18th Century Collections Online* [no date], <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/004807802.0001.000/1:7.7?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>>, (accessed 04.03.20).

After Burke's treatise was published, Immanuel Kant wrote *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* in 1764, and proposed that there are two main forms of the sublime, the mathematical and the dynamical.²⁰ The 'Mathematically Sublime' is defined as an object being overwhelming in size, for example the colossal structures of the pyramids. They are deemed mathematically sublime since they are too vast and difficult for us to perceive all at once. The 'Dynamically Sublime' occurs when the object is overwhelming in physical power, thereby instilling a feeling of danger in us.²¹ This can be exemplified through extreme weather phenomena such as erupting volcanoes and ocean storms because their physical powers are too great for us to fight. Both types of sublime objects share a common characteristic in their ability to endanger people.²² Objects that are overwhelming in size, threaten our rational reasoning, because they are too vast for our imagination to comprehend. Objects that are overwhelming in physical power endanger our physical existence, because we can not overcome them.

In both case the perceptual and imaginative failure evokes in us the idea of limitlessness of the object (the limitlessness of size in the mathematical sublime and limitlessness of the destructive and devastating power of nature in the dynamical sublime). This idea of limitlessness of the object is evoked in us due to the limited capacity of our imagination.²³

This is vital information and a key aspect when I consider creating artistic work. Through understanding the capabilities of the sublime, I can attempt to impart a similar experience upon the viewer. As realised from the previous example, it is possible to experience the sublime by feeling overwhelmed through mental or physical power, in both man-made objects and natural terrains. The concept of the Dynamical Sublime informed the creation of Object Legs 3, as I responded to the experience of viewing large mountains (see Fig.3). As public forms of entertainment, artworks can not endanger people as an erupting volcano would. Due to most artworks and performances being man-made rather than naturally occurring, I have mainly implemented characteristics of the Mathematical Sublime in *Sublime Humility*, the performance. This is portrayed by the large size of the objects and stage, which made it difficult for the audience to comprehend them all at once.

The interpretations of Burke and Kant had a significant impact on future generations of artists, but their ideas particularly resonated in the late 18th century through the art movement 'Romanticism'.

²⁰ 'Sublime (philosophy), Modern Philosophy, Kant', *Wikipedia* [website], 2020, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sublime_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sublime_(philosophy))>, (accessed 04.03.20).

²¹ M. Kuplen, 'The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective', *Con-Textos Kantianos. International Journal of Philosophy*, n. 1, 2015, p. 121, <<https://www.con-textoskantianos.net/index.php/revista/article/view/52/413>>, (accessed 26.03.19).

²² Kuplen, 'The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective', p. 121.

²³ Kuplen, 'The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective', p. 121.

Through painting, artists in this movement explored their imagination to combine dark shadows and dramatic lighting that was stimulating and yet terrifying. Through their continuous search for the 'true sublime', they turned their focus onto nature and were some of the first artists to appreciate the landscape as a subject rather than a background.²⁴ They attempted to blur the boundaries between mind and nature through free play of imagination and a desire to venture beyond human limits. Considered one of the most definitive paintings of the sublime in Romanticism, the work *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818, by German Artist, Caspar David Friedrich encapsulates the power of nature upon man as the subject stands in awe, overlooking a precipice (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, illustrating a sublime experience through nature's power over man.

²⁴ S. Ingram, 'The Sublime in Art Definition Overview and Analysis', *The Art Story*, 2019, <<https://www.theartstory.org/definition/the-sublime-in-art/history-and-concepts/>>, (accessed 5.4.20).

I can understand that this interpretation of the sublime within Romanticism was a further development of Kant's notion of the Dynamical Sublime. It is also valuable to note that this was the beginning of nature being the main subject for artists, epitomising a balance between inspiration and fear. Similar to this notion, I have always been impressed but felt dwarfed by such expansive places. These expansive places can be distinguished as nature, such as oceans, mountains or forests. However, they can also be perceived through man-made structures, such as skyscrapers, cathedrals and arenas. I am amazed by both types of places as they are beyond my understanding of scale. When I am occupying these vast spaces, I feel free, as if holding the potential to fly. I also want to physically fill the empty space and experience its vastness through different senses. This point can lead us into defining man-made spaces, which is relevant when moving from Romanticism into industrial times and post-industrial, capitalist eras.

Moving further into the 20th Century, the more traditional categories of aesthetics, such as beauty and expression, were being questioned or mocked. This spurred new engagements with the sublime and changed the consideration of it as 'natural' into 'metropolitan-industrial'. Artists in this period responded to man-made engineering feats, such as cities with high-rise skylines. The 'Industrial Sublime' was a combination of man-made landscapes with the power of machinery.²⁵ For example people were amazed by the complexity and processes of large production lines, amassed with technology. I believe this defines the shift of inspiration from natural to the man-made. These new aesthetics of technology and mass production stirred fear but also a celebration of its autonomy. I appreciate the appearance of such industrial structures and can recognise how the Industrial Sublime aesthetics has informed the stage piece of *Sublime Humility*. I believe the stage conveys the power of machinery, due to its size, and a brutal approach to engagement, through its harsh metal texture.

In the 21st century, many artists are still engaged with a renewed approach to, what is now defined as, the 'Contemporary Sublime'. The Canadian photographer, Edward Burtynsky takes large-format photographs of industrial landscapes, which includes mining and the consequences of human activity around the globe (see Fig.6). He is interested in how large-scale human systems impress themselves upon the land.²⁶ In his work, the Mathematical Sublime and scale are crucial, as by

²⁵ S. Zoltán, 'The Double-edged Sword: The Technological Sublime in American Novels Between 1900 and 1940', *Semantic Scholar*, 2004, p. 32, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6220/13e7b021fe8a22b80e0a1eb2ddf89da04ecb.pdf?_ga=2.121907531.1927988422.1588584215-647178897.1588584215>, (accessed 6.4.20).

²⁶ R. Khatchadourian, 'The Long View: Edward Burtynsky's quest to photograph a changing planet', *The New Yorker*, 2016, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/19/edward-burtynskys-epic-landscapes>>, (accessed 7.4.20).

comparison, everything else is seen as small. These are a few defining points of the 'Contemporary Sublime', portraying the scale of the sublime and the content, as Global.

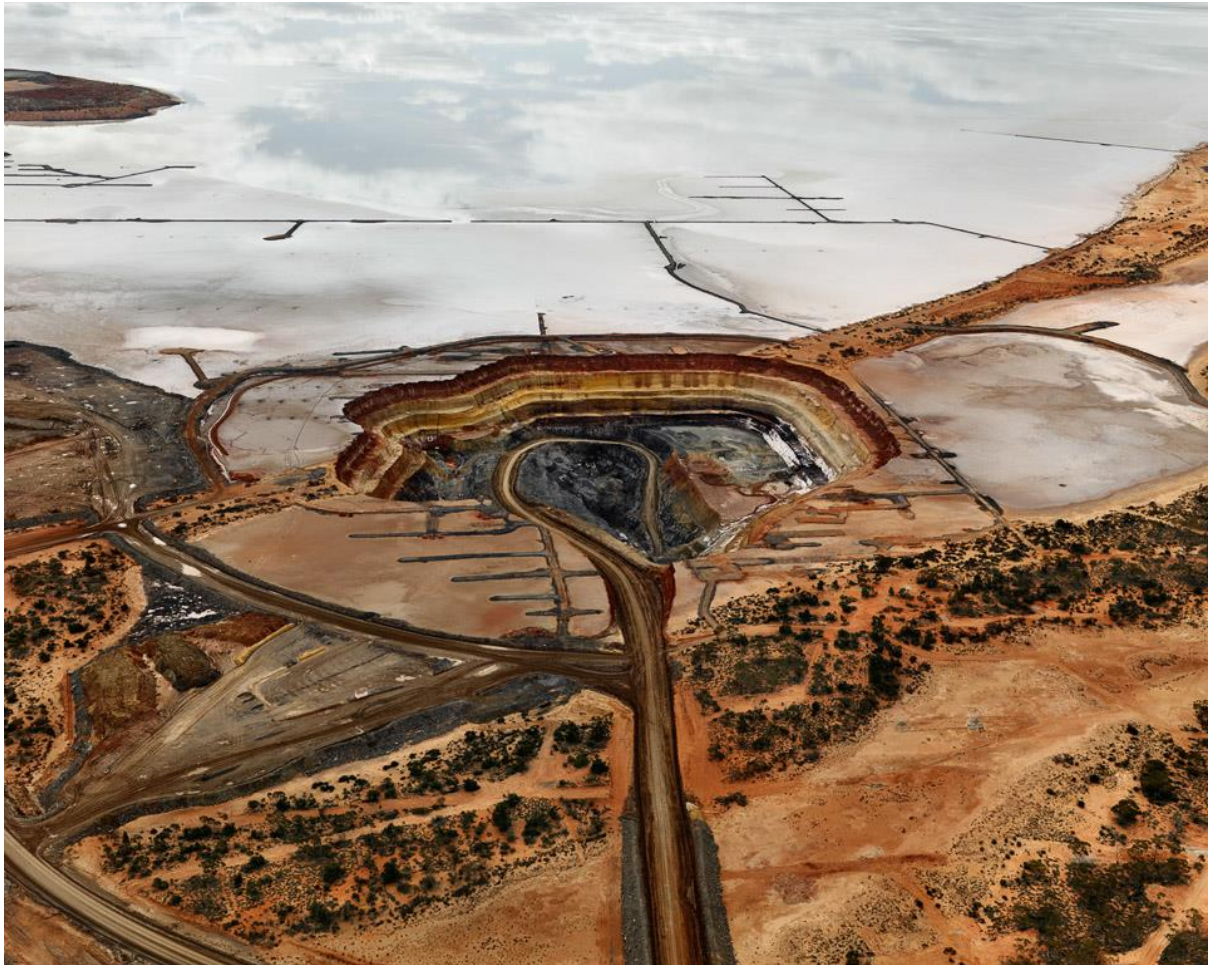


Fig. 6. Silver Lake Operations #5, Lake Lefroy, Western Australia, 2007. Photograph by Edward Burtynsky, illustrating human consequences and the Mathematical Sublime.

This type of artwork is fascinating as it embodies the balance between fear and amazement of man-made scenes, in which the human's consequences are our tool of assessment. It also brings up the complex issue of representing the sublime and if it is possible to portray this experience through Artworks.

How can any sublime that is presented through art *not* get bound up in the take-it-or-leave-it luxury of spectatorhood, how can it not be complicit in sheer showmanship? Surely Kant

was right to dismiss artworks from consideration in his analysis of the sublime, instead positing his aesthetic on experiences of nature?²⁷

In this quote from Bell, we can decipher the difficulties when representing the sublime. Bell describes the theory of the sublime as heavily used in art making and that the sheer array of attempts now makes it extremely difficult to provide a concise definition. It can be argued that no effort in conveying the sublime through art can be matched by its main concern, being an object that is overwhelming in size and power. Since artworks have very defined limits, we could not find them threatening in the same way we experience true sublime objects. However, it can also be argued that artworks have the capabilities of being overwhelming, through mental activity. I believe this method comes from the Dynamical Sublime and implies that our ideas of reason are sufficient enough for artworks to have an effect on us. In extreme circumstances, this type of behaviour has even been defined as 'Stendhal Syndrome', which occurs 'when exposed to the concentrated works of art, affected individuals experience a wide range of symptoms including physical and emotional anxiety.'²⁸ This conveys that the audience of art and performance are capable of perceiving the magnitude and purpose of a concept. This means, that rather than being overwhelmed by the size or danger of an artwork, we can appreciate the creative power that was forged to make it.

Overall, these variations in time and definitions of the sublime are useful to recognise, when understanding the impact it has had on art and philosophy. From these varied definitions, the reader can understand how the sublime functions and what effect it has. The appreciation of nature, industrial structures and artworks portrays the sublime as a balance between fear and awe. From the discussion, we can recognise that scale plays a large part in the experience of the sublime, whether through physical dimensions or mental capacity. I want to now focus on how this scale works, revealing the potential of a 'Large Object'.

²⁷ J. Bell, 'Contemporary Art and the Sublime', *The Art of the Sublime*, edited by Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding, Tate Research Publication, 2013, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/julian-bell-contemporary-art-and-the-sublime-r1108499>>, (accessed 18.9.19).

²⁸ M. Griffiths, 'Having an Art Attack: A brief look at Stendhal Syndrome', *Psychology Today*, 2014, <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-excess/201403/having-art-attack>>, (accessed 7.4.20).

The Large Object

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, I use the information derived from the notion of a Large Object to further answer my thesis questions. This relates to the question, what is the sublime experience and why do I think it could benefit us? The discussion around the Large Object also aims to expand upon the thesis idea, what would *happen* if a person resembled a fictitious character and was extremely large, how would this *work*? I use different case studies of artworks and performance, including public installation, sculpture and puppets to illustrate the potential and impact of large objects. From the investigation, we can understand what a Large Object is, how it relates to the sublime and what impression it leaves on the viewer. This helps the reader understand my personal theory that the sublime can impart humility to the audience through large works, causing them to feel small. In the introduction of this thesis, I described my motivation and approach to making work but I want to further discuss the philosophy behind this approach in order to convey its context. I believe most individuals creating three dimensional works, use their body as a tool for measurement and a point of reference. By utilising this approach, the body can become an instrument for comparison and a creator of artistic works. When analysing the development of my art practice, I have discovered that my work is becoming bigger, larger and taller. This has been an endeavour, to make work that is overwhelming, dominant and threatening, by provoking a combined sense of fear and beauty within the audience. As stated before, when I am in expansive spaces, I feel overwhelmed but also amazed. I plan to convey this balance of feelings to the audience, by provoking them to question their significance amongst the world. This passion for making large objects is illustrated through the stage and Object Legs in *Sublime Humility*, the performance. The stage is large, the Object Legs are large, the performer is large and the audience is positioned below them, appearing dwarfed by the work. I shall now reference different artistic case studies of large objects, including their type and size, to show their impact on the viewer and how it is relevant to *Sublime Humility*.

The size of a work is dependent on the project and the site being indoors or outdoors. The largest artworks and performances in the world are outdoor works, due to their seemingly unlimited amount of space. These public artworks can stretch into the sky, beyond the restrictions of any building or institution. Within the category of public art, there are many subcategories of different types of artworks. There is 'stand-alone' public art, which can be sculptures, structures and statues. 'Integrated' public art can be formed upon existing facades, pavements or landscapes and 'applied' public art can be on a surface, for example murals.²⁹ Due to its environment, stand-alone sculptures

²⁹ 'Public Art', *Wikipedia* [website], 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_art>, (accessed 06.04.20).

and statues are the largest in size of these subcategories. Within the subcategory 'stand-alone' public art, it is even more difficult to define the differences between the types of work. A 'statue' can be seen as an effigy, a carved or cast figure of a person or animal,³⁰ while a 'sculpture' can be defined as a two- or three-dimensional representative or abstract form. It can also be argued that this subcategory should include 'monuments' and 'tombs'. Examples of 'monuments' and 'tombs' include the *Sanctuary of Christ the King* in Almada, Portugal or *The Great Pyramids of Giza* in Egypt. However, both of these works are considered more as shrines and structures that house items, rather than sculptures and statues, where the work is considered a piece of art. These differences in subcategories of public works can be further debated but I wish to focus on sculptures and statues, as examples of large objects leaving an impression on the viewer.

According to the *Guardian* article, 'World's tallest work of public art' to land on Belgian motorway³¹, the largest outdoor sculpture in the world is the *Arc Majeur* in Lavaux-Sainte-Anne, Belgium, which is a 60 metre, 250-tonne steel arc sculpture (see Fig. 7). The largest outdoor statue in the world is *Sardar Patel* (Statue of Unity) in Gujarat, India, which is a 182 metre statue of Indian statesman, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

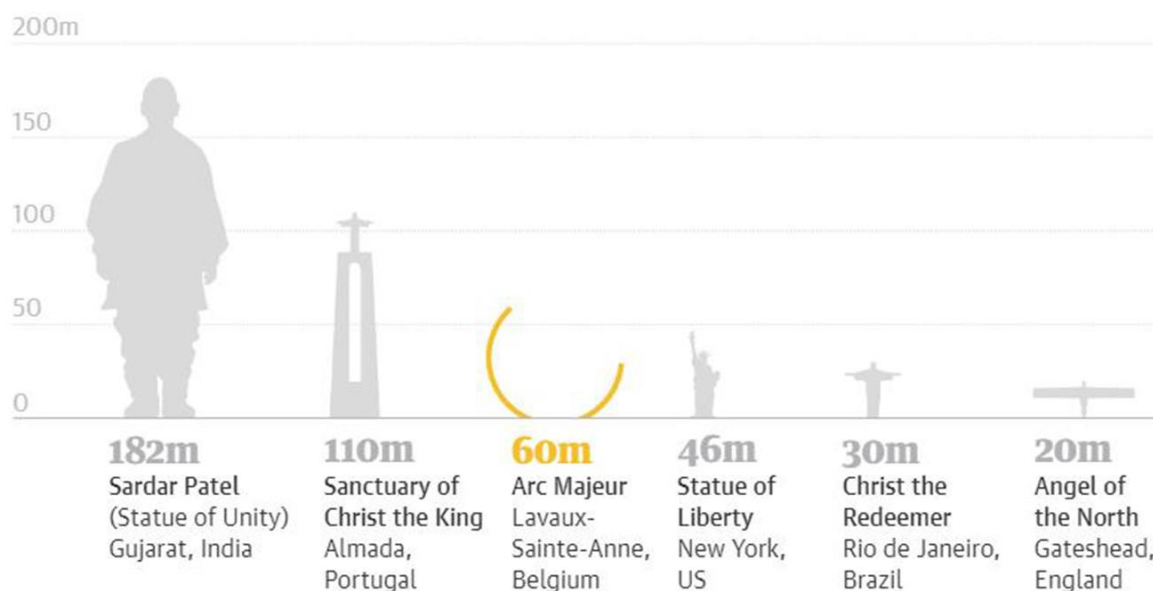


Fig. 7. *Guardian Graphic*, a chart showing the different sizes of the largest sculptures, statues and monuments.

³⁰ 'Statue', *Lexico* [website], 2020, <<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/statue>>, (accessed 07.04.20).

³¹ D. Boffey, 'World's tallest work of public art' to land on Belgian motorway', *Guardian*, 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/31/belgian-motorway-chosen-as-site-for-europe-tallest-artwork-arc-majeur>>, (accessed 7.4.20).

This graphic visualises the difference in size and whether the work is termed as a sculpture, statue or monument. This chart provides key information but most notably, we can distinguish that almost all works portray a form of a person, as an icon figure, while only one, the *Arc Majeur*, portrays an abstract form. This also informs the thesis idea, what would *happen* if a person resembled a fictitious character and was extremely large, how would this *work*? In this case, the fictitious character is illustrated as an icon, but it reveals the enormous popularity of cult-like figures in the form of large objects.

All of this information helps us deconstruct and understand the differences in public artwork. However, it is more difficult to define the subcategories within public performance. Performing arts can include public entertainment held in large stages, arenas or stadiums, but I want the discussion to remain around large objects, which act as the focus of attention, rather than the backdrop. I discuss the concept of large objects, through referencing public performance in the form of stilt walkers and puppets. I explain how they work, portraying its impact on the viewer and illustrate how they have influenced the performance techniques of *Sublime Humility*.

Earlier in this thesis, I stated that there is potential in altering the human silhouette through the use of objects. This technique relates to large objects and is illustrated through two examples of public performance, stilt walkers and puppets. These art forms demonstrate the body being extended or even controlled as a separate entity. Stilt walkers use 'stilts', which are poles, posts or pillars that allow a person to stand at a height above the ground.³² Originally, stilts were used for people to work at an elevated height during construction, but now are mainly used for entertainment in parades and public related events (see Fig. 8). As discussed in chapter one, *Sublime Humility*, my artistic production has been inspired by stilt walkers but utilises stilts in a different way. Unlike stilt walkers, the performers in my production did not use their Object Legs to walk with. This was due to the concept of the dysfunctional body, by not relying on their legs to move, and my intended visual of the Object Legs. However, I did use a similar technique of stilt walkers by utilising the height of the performer to mask and alter the shape of the body, by extending the performers limbs.

³² 'Stilts', *Wikipedia* [website], 2020, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stilts>>, (accessed 07.04.20).



Fig. 8. Example of a stilt walker at *Burning Man*, illustrating the potential of enlarging the human silhouette.

My second example of public performance is an ancient form of theatre known as Puppets. Puppets can be defined similarly to statues, as an object resembling a human, animal or mythical figure. However, the difference between the two art forms is that puppets are animated or manipulated by another person. Puppetry has been practiced for centuries through various forms, but I was particularly interested in puppets that outsized the human body. These types of puppets are controlled by human/s or machines, but are viewed as a completely separate entity to them. The company, Royal de Luxe, is a French mechanical, marionette company and is considered one of the most iconic street theatres. They are most commonly known for their *Giants Spectacular* which consists of extremely large, mechanical puppets. Their famous marionette, *The Sultan's Elephant*, was around 42 tonnes in weight and 11.2 metres in height (see Fig. 9). *The Sultan's Elephant*, most

notable show was in London, 4th to 7th May in 2006.³³ During this period of time, the Elephant was accompanied by a 5.5 metre-tall girl. The event was produced by the creative company, Artichoke, and involved the enormous marionettes walking around the city. This event was used to enchant the one million people who saw it and was a great opportunity to unite community spirit.



Fig. 9. *The Sultan's Elephant*, created by Royal de Luxe, produced by Artichoke for London event 2006.

I believe this event highlights the importance and effect that public performance and large objects can have on communities, cities and countries. As an example, this event was so unlikely and unusual that these large works became memorable. Although I did not use puppets in *Sublime Humility*, the performance, I can recognise the connections between my work and this art form. Puppets are a good example, as they similarly extend the body and reduce the ego, by shifting attention away from the human and onto the object.

Overall, these various case studies of public art and public performance are essential to discuss, as they demonstrate society's historical interest in large objects. These large works are capable of making huge impressions, as they provide an immersive experience by enveloping the viewer and

³³ 'The Sultan's Elephant', Artichoke, 2006, <<https://www.artichoke.uk.com/project/the-sultans-elephant/>>, (accessed 7.4.20).

dominating the space. They hold implications of the sublime, as they are similarly perceived as 'limitless objects' that are hard to comprehend, causing the viewer to appear and feel small. From these case studies, we can acknowledge the popularity of large objects through the longevity of their practice and by the mass gatherings that surround them. As a method of celebration, sculptures and statues have been largely monumental. In more extreme cases, these large objects can cause people to worship them, as statues and monuments are usually physical symbols of cults, idols or gods. This can lead to 'Idolatry', which is the worship of idols and 'extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone.'³⁴ Although these people are worshipping the symbolic nature of these objects, they can also project this adoration onto the physical nature of these objects. I think that a contributing factor to the practice of manifesting idols is the attempt to replicate something higher than ourselves. The transcendent nature of this can be similarly identified in the artistic representation of the sublime.

Through sheer scale and size, these large works can be the epitome of power and strength, but it is also notable to explore a sense of paradox within them. As an additional note on this subject, I consider how these large works could be undermined or embody contradictions between appearance and truth. Creating artwork and performance can be an effective way of critiquing paradoxes in the world. However, making something creative can also hold its own paradoxical elements. I perceive this paradox within the artistic manifestation of the sublime, as it can be interpreted as just a representation and not an authentic experience. I have used my artistic production to critique concepts of functionality and control, by creating paradoxes within the Object Legs. Using the experience of the sublime as a performance method can simultaneously put pressure on the audience, while pointing out the inaccuracies of their perception. For example, the performers of *Sublime Humility* appear tall and overwhelming, similar to the sublime experience, but the Objects Legs are dysfunctional, as the performer's struggle to walk, provoking empathy in the audience.

From the overview of the sublime, I have highlighted relevant points, including the use of fear, the concept of a limitless object, the influence of nature and the difficulties of representing the sublime. When defining my own concept of a Large Object, I referenced case studies such as public art, including sculptures and statues, and public performance, involving stilts and puppets. This discussion connected the Large Object to the sublime experience, revealing the potential of objects when enlarged. In addition to this, I also brought up the issue of paradoxical elements in the artistic representation of the sublime. These various findings have contributed to answering my thesis

³⁴ 'Idolatry', *Lexico* [website], 2020, <<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/idolatry>>, (accessed 08.04.20).

questions. In relation to these areas within the sublime, I think it is important to explore notions of the body and humility. These subjects are analysed in chapter three, to understand and answer, how the sublime experience can benefit us.



Chapter Three
Body Dys/functionality
and Humility

The thesis has so far discussed the sublime by illustrating how it functions and what effect this experience has on the viewer. This has been defined as a decentralisation of the human orientated perspective through a realisation of one's significance, which in turn, leads to an elevated experience. It is important to comprehend that this is a human experience and by definition, only happens in the human mind, causing the reaction of specific emotions. Therefore, I believe the concept of the body, through the person experiencing it, and the notion of humility, as the emotion that is instigated, are integral to this topic. These two subjects are topics by themselves, as they hold many characterisations, but this chapter will focus on the specific elements related to *Sublime Humility*, the performance. The subject of the body is connected to corporality, performance and human-animal hybrids. The concept of humility has been historically recognised and I connect it to morals, leadership and society.

Chapter three examines and discusses these two subjects to further answer my thesis questions, how could the sublime teach us humility and why could this benefit us? I begin this chapter by defining the body and then describing my interpretation of it, using this to broach the subject of disability theory. Disability theory is an extensive subject but I only discuss the aspects that are related to my thesis questions and artistic production. In this section, I provide insight into disability theory and integrate my own interpretation of the subject for the reader to understand its relationship to my work.

From the overview of the body, I introduce the concept of humility. As another expansive subject with multiple connections, I focus on the philosophy and morals of humility. In this section, I reference different case studies to define humility and use this information to inform my personal theory, which involves the implication of humility through the sublime experience.

The Body

Bodies are constant and everywhere, they are how we interact, sense and interpret each other. They are subject to celebration and controversy, as bodies can differ in size, shape, colour and age. Bodies are a source of life, sexuality, pain and strength. It feels difficult to develop a concept of the body because there is a variety of information and diversity of ways it can be manifested. To define a theory, is to solidify its meaning in our understanding, which feels at odds with a fluctuating sense of the body. In relation to my thesis, I focus on the body's aesthetic, as an organic matter, its functionality, as a performer, and its philosophy, as a transformative entity. The discussion of the body shall be within the framework of my thesis questions and ideas. How does the extension of the

body dissolve the ego? What happens if a body resembles an animal or fictitious character and how would this *work*?

I relate the 'visual' of a body to an aesthetic appreciation of its shape, form and colour. In the process of dissolving the ego, I start to pay attention to the body's visual aspects, as an artistic method. In particular, I am drawn to the deviations of a body, whether it is weak, thin and gaunt or bulging, muscly and disproportionate. These descriptions of divergent bodies begin to portray more polarising views and it is my goal to focus on this particular aesthetic of the body. This fascination with bodies was a strong stimulus for my Object Leg's appearance and function, being exaggerated and over-extended. These types of bodies stray from the 'normal' body, which could be considered as proportionate and fully functional. People's fear of what is different, can be the core reason for many problematic views of bodies. This can be evaluated by using the theory of 'the other', where an individual is perceived as lacking essential characteristics possessed by the 'normal' group.³⁵ I argue that there are many reasons why a body may be the way it presents, such as birth deciding its genetics, colour or defects. It can be altered by choice such as exercising, dieting or body modification. It can also be defined by accident through injuries, medical problems or unplanned events.

There is a plethora of inspirational imagery to draw from, however the concept of the body is not just limited to human but can incorporate all animal or living organisms. This can entail extreme variations in torso size, number of limbs or movement possibilities. The extensive amount of dissimilar species can portray a diversity of textures, shades and senses for us to draw inspiration from. Living alongside one another, I believe there has been a historical obsession between humans and animals, demonstrating an extension and combination of bodies. In creative practices, this obsession has birthed a range of fictitious, monster-like and dystopian bodies. The notion of humans and animals being combined can be portrayed as hybrid creatures in folklore such as mermaids, satyrs and centaurs. I interpret the conception of these mythical creatures as an extension of the human body and a combination of animal bodies. Taking inspiration from real animals such as fish, goats and horses, these fictitious creatures provide us an understanding of their appearance and movement possibilities. Appearing larger than the average person and according to those animals' traits, we can imagine how these body extensions could look and work. This method of combination and theme of the human-animal body has inspired the visual, shape and movement of Object Legs 1 in *Sublime Humility*, the performance (see Fig. 10).

³⁵ L. Melani, 'The Other', *Brooklyn College English Department*, 2009, <<https://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/other.html>>, (accessed 29.4.20).

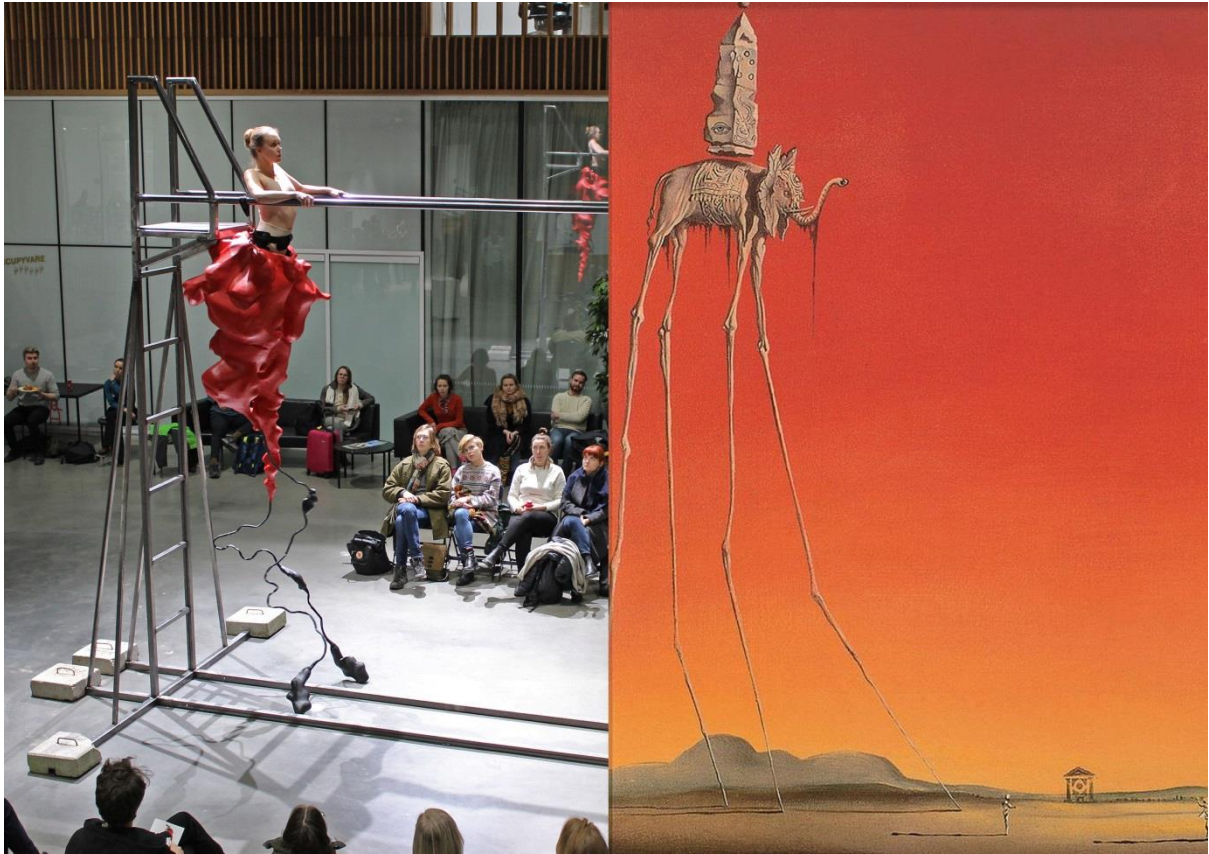


Fig. 10. Object Legs 1, taking inspiration from *The Elephants*, Dalí. Example of surreal, human-animal hybrid.



Fig. 11. Object Legs 3, taking inspiration from Trolltunga Mountain, Norway. Example of nature/body hybrid.

Not just restricted to humans and animals, the idea of the body can also incorporate living organisms such as plants, fungi and bacteria. To 'anthropomorphize', is to impose human traits onto animals, inanimate objects or natural phenomena.³⁶ Similar to the previous example of mythical figures, there are creatures in folklore associated with natural habitats such as woodlands, lakes and mountains hosting fairies, nymphs and dwarfs. Rather than a combination of human and animal bodies, these figures can be recognised as natural phenomena embodying human spirits. I also associate this method, to anthropomorphize, with the theory of the sublime as the viewer similarly imposes emotions onto inanimate objects such as mountains or oceans. The theme of this nature/body hybrid and technique, to anthropomorphize, inspired the appearance, shape and movement of Object Legs 3 in *Sublime Humility*, the performance (see Fig. 11).

Overall, these variations in definitions and aesthetics of the body are a significant source of visual inspiration for me and were particularly relevant to this artistic project. The study of these subjects demonstrates our historical and current interest in body extensions, which answers my thesis idea, what would *happen* if a person resembled an animal or fictitious character. Through the method of dissolving the ego, I view these diverse bodies as visual matter and I aim to alter and replicate them as objects. By providing this definition and interpretation of the body, the reader can understand its concept and my perspective of it. After studying the results of my work from previous years, I started to realise my approach has been portrayed through 'dys/functional bodies'. To reiterate, I interpret this term as a body that is functioning abnormally, which can be understood in opposition to what is considered functioning normally. This terminology is complex, as everyone's interpretation of normal differs and I expand upon this issue later in the chapter. However, in order to discuss abnormal bodies as the periphery of this subject, we must recognise a standard definition. The definition of a 'normal body' could be derived from the measurement of average height, weight and function. Using this perspective as the grounds for my research, I can analyse the dys/functional body. I attribute the term dys/functional body to disability theory, to comprehend what could be viewed as dysfunctional, and to highlight the problematic views of the disabled body.

³⁶ R. Nauret, 'Why do we anthropomorphize?' *Psych Central*, 2019, <<https://psychcentral.com/news/2018/03/01/why-do-we-anthropomorphize/11766.html>>, (accessed 16.04.20).

Discussing Disability

When discussing disability theory, I want to practise ethical reflection as a method of developing respect for the concerns of individuals within this minority group. The analysis of this subject shall employ values of honesty and caring, while debating sensitive issues. Disability is defined as a 'physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions.'³⁷ However, disability theory is an extensive system outside of medical terminology and can incorporate many classifications. This quote from Julie Avril Minich, professor of critical disability theory, clarifies the dissection of this topic as she discusses her perspective of disability studies.

The methodology of disability studies as I would define it, then, involves scrutinizing not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations.³⁸

Minich's quote is useful when expanding our view of disability theory and therefore disabled people. Often categorised in terms of medical or biological defects, disability can moreover be defined by the social norms that surround it. Minich mentions that we should focus on the social conditions of the body instead of its impairments, but I have found that my thesis engages with both areas. When approaching this Master thesis, I was mostly uninformed about theories and writers regarding disability. By forming the ideas of *Sublime Humility*, it encouraged further engagement with the subject, as I recognised how my topic was connected to disability theory. My research of the subject has informed my findings and helped me in further understanding the connection between the body, sublime and humility. I introduce the discussion around disability theory and then reference the performance work of Lisa Bufano as an artistic case study, which provides the grounds for my own interpretation. This section involves a reference to the writing of Amanda Cachia, an Australian curator and writer who specialises in curatorial, performance and disability studies. This assists me in deconstructing the performance work of Lisa Bufano, an American, inter-disciplinary and disabled artist, who incorporated elements of performance, body and dance. Together, this critical research

³⁷ 'Disability', *Merriam-Webster* [website], 2020, <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disability>>, (accessed 24.04.20).

³⁸ J. A. Minich, 'Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now', *Critical Disability Studies, Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities*, Issue 5.1, 2016, <<https://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/>>, (accessed 16.04.20).

and artistic case study helps the reader further understand this subject, as I convey my analysis and its relation to my personal theory.

I establish here, that I am an able bodied person, with limited experience in the disabled and movement impaired community. Approaching this topic, I am cautious of my own bias, outlook and privilege when discussing the subject. Although unintentional, being unaware of certain groups or minorities of people can cause a skewed outlook or harmful attitude. In regards to disability, this takes the form of 'Ableism', which by definition 'is the discrimination or prejudice against people who have disabilities. Ableism can take the form of ideas and assumptions, stereotypes, attitudes and practices, physical barriers in the environment, or larger scale oppression.'³⁹ I believe it is essential to recognise this term, as we can start to comprehend our own assumptions and therefore challenge or better understand them. I have personally benefitted from reading the research of the writers who identify within this group, as their perspective broadens my understanding. Through their discussion, I have recognised the need to represent the subject through artistic means. Disability and disabled people have been represented throughout history, via artworks and performances, from both non-abled and abled bodied artists. Organising the themes of this artistic representation into three categories, there are historical representations of disability, examples of 'freak-shows' exemplifying power and prejudice and an exploration of the body through performance and 'post-humanism'.⁴⁰ I concentrate on the last theme of representing disability through an exploration of the body in performance and post-humanism. This is for the reader to further understand the background of this selected category, within an artistic context, and therefore my approach to this subject. From this theme, I reference the contemporary performance work of Bufano, which informs the answer to my thesis question, how does the extension of the body dissolve the ego? I believe Bufano's work employs the extension of the body as an artistic method, to challenge our definition of the dys/functional body. I examine her performance work to further contribute to my personal theory by using my research of Cachia's analysis, who has similarly investigated Bufano. Although this subject may appear to deviate from my topic, I believe the study of the dys/functional body contributes to my thesis and was essential for my artistic work.

To outline the basis for studying Bufano's work, I introduce the ideas of Cachia from her essay *Disabling Surrealism: Reconstituting Surrealist tropes in contemporary art*. In her essay, she compares how Surrealist artists have dealt with the disabled body and how disabled artists have

³⁹'Ableism', *Urban Dictionary* [website], 2013, <<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Ableism>>, (accessed 16.04.20).

⁴⁰ K. Watson, 'Disability in Art History', *Art History Teaching Resources*, edited by J. Mann, 2015, <<http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/disability-in-art-history/>>, (accessed 15.10.19).

dealt with this, by using their own corporality.⁴¹ Cachia illustrates similarities and differences between the two groups, as she believes surrealist artists dealt with psychoanalytical aspects of sexuality, castration and the uncanny. In comparison to this, she depicts how contemporary disabled art presents the uncanny with a twist, portraying the same tropes as the Surrealists with authenticity. Disabled artists are capable of displaying real bodies on stage, as opposed to symbols, portraying how Surrealism can be both enhanced and destabilised.⁴² I have chosen this essay as a reference, as I have similarly employed traits of surrealism and disability in *Sublime Humility*, the performance.

The performance work of Lisa Bufano can be used as a strong comparison between surrealist themes and the use of disabled bodies on stage. Bufano was an interdisciplinary artist and at the age of 21, a bacterial infection led to the amputation of her feet and fingers. The artist then used prosthetics and props in her performance-based practice, such as strapping table legs to her arms and legs. In many of her performances, she displays her amputee body on stage and uses the props to transform her body into animal-like forms (see Fig. 12). Using these props as limb extensions, her movements resemble 'crawling', as she moves on all fours. These objects alter her movement but provide new possibilities for the audience to focus upon her body, providing associations to animals and insects. Bufano appears similar to a spider or praying mantis as she uses the method of appropriating animal forms, which can be related to the previously noted human-animal hybrids. Concerning the Post-humanist and animal facets of her work, it becomes more difficult to discuss aspects of the 'animal', as her work could be interpreted as disguising the differences between species and used to reinforce human's, seemingly, exceptional status.

Animal studies thus brings to light the need for a new, posthumanist ethics, one that does not rely on taxonomical distinctions or on normative hierarchies of reason and language to determine who has moral status, or who is a who, rather than a what.⁴³

This new introduction of animal studies raises issues that I believe are relevant to Bufano's work, as she similarly explores techniques that acknowledge others way of being and moving in the world, which may feel foreign. This argument can also be related to the previous discussion of Post-humanism within *Sublime Humility* and issues of 'dissolving the ego.'

⁴¹ A. Cachia, 'Disabling Surrealism: Reconstituting Surrealist Tropes in Contemporary Art,' *Disability and Art History*, edited by Ann Millett-Gallant and Elizabeth Howie, Routledge, New York and London, 2016, <<http://www.amandacachia.com/writing/disabling-surrealism-reconstituting-surrealist-tropes-contemporary-art/>>, (accessed 24.09.19).

⁴² Cachia, 'Disabling Surrealism: Reconstituting Surrealist Tropes in Contemporary Art,' p. 133.

⁴³ K. Weil, 'Animal', *Critical Posthumanism: Genealogy of the Posthuman*, 2018, <<https://criticalposthumanism.net/animal/>>, (accessed 05.05.20).



Fig. 12. Lisa Bufano performing on her Queen Anne table legs, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 2012.

When discussing her performance work, Bufano describes her own terror in being watched, but explains that she channels this tension into exaggerating her physical modes by presenting herself on stilts.⁴⁴ Below is a quote from Bufano, describing her inspiration and process as a performer.

My eye has always been drawn to abnormal forms... It's just that now my tool is my body. I'm still animating a form, but it's my own form... But being a performer with a deformity, I find that there's a gut response in audiences, an attraction/repulsion aspect to it that can be

⁴⁴ A. Cachia, 'Disabling Surrealism: Reconstituting Surrealist Tropes in Contemporary Art,' *Disability and Art History*, p. 138, <<http://www.amandacachia.com/writing/disabling-surrealism-reconstituting-surrealist-tropes-contemporary-art/>>, (accessed 24.09.19).

compelling. I just hope that there's a balance between that gut response and the substance of a performance.⁴⁵

In her quote, Bufano outlines what effects body extensions can have on the performer's movement and audience, during a performance. This quote also supports Cachia's insight into the power and potentiality of disabled artists exhibiting their bodies on stage. I believe that Bufano's idea of 'attraction/repulsion' is useful when understanding the sublime and further evaluating similar artworks and performances. In the theory of the sublime, I believe attraction/repulsion can be understood as a combination of feeling 'pleasure/displeasure', due to our attempts and failures in perceiving an object. For example, we may deem certain objects or people to be ugly because we find their feature arrangement discomfoting, as if composed from dissimilar elements. These perceptual features of an 'ugly object' may be understood as being too obtrusive or chaotic, making it difficult for our reasoning abilities to process or find a solution.⁴⁶ I believe this concept of pleasure and displeasure in the sublime can support Bufano's insight into her own work, by recognising the conflicting experience within the audience. I also interpret Bufano's work as a dissolving of her own character, detracting attention from her ego, by reducing it to object, material and movement. She decides for the viewer what shall be invasive to their perception of her body. Through this invasion, the audience can be stimulated by its displeasure (repulsion), which produces a sense of pleasure (attraction).

I relate this disturbance in the audience to a sense of surprise that can be felt by finding beauty in the dys/functional or disabled body. In an interview with Tobin Siebers, an American author, on his book *Disability Aesthetics*, 2010, Siebers discusses people's difficulty in seeing disabled people as symbols of beauty, by stating his own intentions of his work.

My first goal is to disrupt the belief that disability can have no connection to the ancient craft of the beautiful. When most people think about disability, beauty does not immediately spring to mind... Nevertheless, the history of modern art unveils increasingly, as it evolves a powerful connection to disability.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ 'Lisa Bufano: Career', *Wikipedia*, 2020 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Bufano>, (accessed 17.04.20).

⁴⁶ M. Kuplen, 'The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective', *Con-Textos Kantianos. International Journal of Philosophy*, n. 1, 2015, p. 117 <<https://www.con-textoskantianos.net/index.php/revista/article/view/52/413>>, (accessed 26.03.19).

⁴⁷ T. Siebers, 'The Art of Disability: An Interview with Tobin Siebers by Mike Levin', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 2010, <<https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1263/1272>>, (accessed 21.04.20).

Siebers' belief provides a more expansive view of aesthetics and a diverse conception of rethinking the human. I believe Siebers' quote verbalises the concealed connection that I recognise between performance, beauty and the disabled body. The association between beauty and the dys/functional body is not made, but this combination can provide a powerful tool for artistic means. This insight into the dys/functional body has contributed to the shape and movement of Object Legs 2 in *Sublime Humility*, the performance (see Fig. 2). I chose to represent an abstract form of limbless, disfigured and disabled bodies because they hold a strong connection to these conflicting feelings within the audience, between beauty, the body and the sublime. This conflicting experience can reveal a fear within us, provoking self-preservation, but can also provide feelings of pleasure. By detracting attention from the ego of the performer, the audience is given a chance to appreciate the beauty of a dys/functional body. Using this artistic case study and discussion of the disability theory, we can perceive a historical curiosity and obsession with fictitious, animal and dys/functional bodies. The information provided around the body has contributed to the development of my artistic production, through an exploration of fear and beauty. From this perspective, I shall discuss humility, which is the next subject within my topic.

Humility

As stated before, I interpret the theory of the sublime as experiencing displeasure/pleasure, which I relate to the feelings of repulsion/attraction. In regards to this, Kant associates the experience of dis/pleasure in the sublime with the feeling of respect.⁴⁸ To experience the sublime is to acknowledge an inadequacy in one's physical and sensible nature. Through one's inability to control, understand or overcome these forces, a feeling of respect can be produced. This experience grants respect to forces outside of oneself, which in turn, provides a feeling of pleasure through one's freedom. This can be defined as a freedom from understanding the incomprehensible nature of the sublime. I associate the inter relationship between respect, freedom and the sublime, with the quality of humility. As defined in my terminology, I recognise that by feeling small in the presence of something larger, we are given freedom from our own pride. Relative to the theory of the sublime and the body, humility is a key factor in understanding its impact on the viewer. In this section, I define humility using research and case studies for the reader to further understand the subject. From this definition, I provide my own interpretation, describing how humility features in my personal theory by connecting it to the body and the sublime.

First commonly used in religious scriptures, humility has since been widely debated as a vice or virtue, with differing definitions to this day. As an extensive subject, I have approached the research with my topic in mind, to understand how it could contribute to my theory. To explore these chosen areas of humility, I utilise the research of different writers as an introduction and guideline for this investigation. This includes investigating the paper 'Humility' by Heather Battaly⁴⁹, an American Philosopher, and the chapter, 'Humility' in *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice* by William Damon and Anne Colby, American Professor and Author.⁵⁰ After defining these areas of humility, I provide my interpretation and its relation to my thesis topic, by conveying its purpose within my personal theory.

Battaly's paper provides an overview of contemporary analyses of humility, by debating with other researcher's views on the subject. In reaction to their interpretations, she outlines humility using the

⁴⁸ M. Kuplen, 'The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective', *Con-Textos Kantianos. International Journal of Philosophy*, n. 1, 2015, p. 124 <<https://www.con-textoskantianos.net/index.php/revista/article/view/52/413>>, (accessed 26.03.19).

⁴⁹ H. Battaly, 'Humility', *Academia*, [no date], <<https://www.academia.edu/38606769/Humility>>, (accessed 19.10.19).

⁵⁰ W. Damon & A. Colby, 'Humility' *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1973788>>, (Created from aalto-ebooks on 28.08.19).

Aristotelian tradition of vice and virtue by studying its character traits. The different researchers she has chosen provide definitions by arguing the meaning and role of humility in epistemology.

Norvin Richards (1988) argues that humility involves an accurate estimation of one's accomplishments, rather than ignorance of them...A. T. Nuyen (1998) expands on Richards' idea that humility involves keeping one's accomplishments in perspective...Nancy Snow (1995) argues that humility is a disposition to accurately recognize your limitations. In short, humility requires the absence of the motivation for status or self-importance, and the presence of good motivations. (Roberts and Cleveland 2017)⁵¹

The diverse viewpoints from these selected researchers are extensive and differ in certain areas, but most focus upon accepting one's limitations which involves having an awareness of them. Battaly makes it aware that these evaluations were all self-oriented, rather than other-oriented. Meaning that these interpretations focus on one's own limitations rather than considering their outlook on other people. This idea on focussing on oneself differs to the previous discussion around disability and Post-humanism, however it illustrates the main paradox within humility that remains an unresolved issue. This is the belief that it is self-defeating to attribute humility to oneself. In stating that 'I am humble', it can appear that I am proud which therefore does not seem humble anymore.⁵²

Overall, I find Battaly's paper relevant, as it provides some factual meanings of humility, revealing people's true perspectives. As mentioned before, I relate humility to individuals feeling small in the presence of something larger and that this experience can provide insight into our limited perspective, therefore benefiting us. In relation to my thesis questions, the previous findings have answered how the Sublime experience could impart humility. The information from this study of humility can answer, why I think this experience could benefit us. Understanding humility can lead us to having a more accurate estimation of our own accomplishments and by keeping them in perspective, we can realise our own limitations. I find these experiences to be beneficial, not only for the individual, leading to more personal satisfaction, but also for others, who may require help. By having an accurate or moderate view of ourselves, we are able to better understand, listen and therefore assist those in need.

When deliberating over people in need of help, Battaly brings up a fascinating point that can challenge these views. She states, that feminist philosophers have pointed out the language of humility is used to keep oppressed people down. She describes how oppressed people are urged to

⁵¹ H. Battaly, 'Humility', *Academia*, [no date], I- IV, <<https://www.academia.edu/38606769/Humility>>, (accessed 19.10.19).

⁵² Battaly, 'Humility', IV.

feel humble, grateful and submissive. From this stance Battaly asks, 'is humility a virtue for people who are oppressed? Relatedly, does humility help, or hinder, progress toward liberation?'⁵³ I currently do not have the answer for this, but these are vital points to consider in opposition to the views described above. If an outcome of the sublime is to experience humility and therefore pleasure, how can this experience benefit others who may require help? Is this experience of the sublime self-defeating?

To assist a response to this question and further contribute to the definition of humility, I examine the research of Damon and Colby in their book, *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice*. This book presents the lives and work of six 20th Century Moral Leaders, who pursued causes such as social justice and human rights. To understand the reasoning of the leader's choices they explore the workings of three virtues, which are inner truthfulness, humility and faith.⁵⁴ I have chosen to investigate the chapter 'Humility', as it relates to my topic and personal investigation. I present an overview of their thoughts in this chapter, referencing the chosen leaders and then describe my analysis of this, which further contributes to my personal theory.

To help us understand the need for humility in contemporary life, Damon and Colby describe some modern daily scenarios.

The popularity of television competitions such as 'American Idol' and the rapid spread of online social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter reflect the appeal of forums where people can make ego-building public presentations of self. In recent times, the desire to display personal achievement and celebrity seems stronger than any distaste for self-congratulation and arrogance. Along with today's press to cultivate and display the self, we have seen in recent years a growing assumption that vigorous self-promotion is required for advancement in corporate and other stratified settings. Indeed, some of the business leaders most admired for their innovation and business success have been notably lacking in humility.⁵⁵

The description may seem familiar and I believe it guides us to consider the potential benefits of humility. This quote portrays the rarity of considering humility in our daily lives or meeting others who embody it. Damon and Colby illustrate humility as an outdated value and even unfashionable,

⁵³ H. Battaly, 'Humility', *Academia*, [no date], IV, <<https://www.academia.edu/38606769/Humility>>, (accessed 19.10.19).

⁵⁴ W. Damon & A. Colby, 'Humility', *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1973788>>, (Created from aalto-ebooks on 28.08.19).

⁵⁵ Damon & Colby, 'Humility', p.126.

as it is compelled to not be part of our decision making. In their book, they refer to world moral leaders, including Abraham Heschel, an American-Polish rabbi, and Dag Hammarskjöld, a Swedish economist. By examining their own pursuits, the moral leaders describe how humility has played a role in their path and success as leaders. Their description of leadership seems at odds with our understanding of corporate leadership, where humility remains mostly unseen. Damon and Colby portray the leaders as turning their attention away from their own egos, and toward a greater ambition of something more lasting than themselves. They depict their chosen leaders as having a low self-focus, as they lose themselves to their passions for human welfare, peace and justice.⁵⁶ Acting as stewards to their institution, their purpose was illustrated as serving the community, with their acts being accompanied by a sense of self-reflection. Damon and Colby describe how Heschel spoke to a group of people that included many atheists, 'of the intellect as overwhelmed in the face of mystery and humility as the proper acknowledgment of human beings' inability to fully grasp that mystery.'⁵⁷ But this sense of humility in relation to something transcendent was not just limited to religion. Damon and Colby describe how Hammarskjöld also spoke about this experience of humility in 'relation to the transcendent and his view of spiritual meaning as ineffable, beyond full comprehension in human terms.'⁵⁸ This portrays the transcendent nature of humility, acting outside of religion and our own understanding. I relate this facet of transcendence to my previous discussion on the transcendent nature of the sublime and believe that these two areas can be connected. However, the ultimate significance of humility and lack of clarity in our motives to pursue humility can be unclear. I ponder if these views are examples of excessive self-seeking, narcissism or doubting ones capabilities. To challenge this idea, the moral leaders state that the act of self-criticism can be debilitating and should be overcome. They explain that when we begin to focus on what we are trying to accomplish together, instead of focusing on our weaknesses and fears, we can overcome self-recrimination.

These studies are a glance into humility as a subject, but they are presented for the reader to further understand an expanded definition of humility. I selected these points of Battaly, Damon and Colby, as they discuss definitions of humility that I connect with my topic. They portray humility as beneficial for people, beyond our understanding and in relation to something much greater than us. Battaly's interpretation suggests that an awareness and acceptance of our limitations enables us to gain a more realistic view of our behaviour. Despite the examination of humility having divine roots,

⁵⁶ W. Damon & A. Colby, 'Humility', *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015, p.138, ProQuest Ebook Central, <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1973788>>, (Created from aalto-ebooks on 28.08.19).

⁵⁷ Damon & Colby, 'Humility', p. 135.

⁵⁸ Damon & Colby, 'Humility', p. 135.

I recognise that philosophically, most of these definitions concern the relationships between humans. Damon and Colby's study illustrates how humility has facilitated the leader's perspective and bonds with the people around them. Their investigation displays a more concentrated use of humility within the moral leaders, but Damon and Colby state that it can play a role in more ordinary lives, by pursuing the ideals that we believe in.

Provoked by the experience of the sublime, I believe humility can be a concept that benefits us. Through humility, I argue that one's relationship with oneself and others could be advanced by having a greater understanding of one's limitations. By seeing oneself within the larger context of life, an understanding can be gained of one's slight presence amongst the world. This keeps our lives in perspective and gives more comprehension to something that transcends us.

Conclusion

The conclusion summarises and reflects upon the three chapters of this thesis and presents the answers to my two thesis questions. These answers explain my personal theory and illustrate how it was utilised in my artistic production. My Master thesis project began with research questions and design ideas, which turned into a process of making and testing large objects. The creative process culminated in the form of two live events and an exhibition for various audiences. Using the documentation and response to these creative events, I began the process of writing, by studying artistic and theoretical works. In writing, I have explored my chosen topic, answered the research questions and proposed my personal theory.

In Chapter one, I introduced *Sublime Humility* and discussed the pre-performance period, which involved elaborating upon the ideas of the Object Legs and the making process. Through this, I illustrated the inspiration, form and movement of the three Object Legs. The three designs resulted from a practice of drawing inspiration from diverse areas, such as surreal bodies and human-animal hybrids. In the making process, I explored my role as a stage designer and artist, in fluctuation between the fields of live arts and visual arts. During this exploration, I had guidance from makers, costume and stage technicians who helped inform my material decisions, including the stage. As stated previously, the final design of the stage was a result of numerous changes and its development is a good example of unplanned methods where the design process follows the needs of the performance.

During the performances of *Sublime Humility*, different facets could be identified, which were then dissected and studied for further consideration. Within this section, I reflected upon the spontaneous nature of the choreography but can now recognise how visual cues of the Object legs informed the movements of the performers. After the performance, I gained much insight into aspects of the function and context of the stage. Therefore, I depicted the function of the stage, as a catwalk presentation, and the context of the space, as a public lobby. Illustrated in this chapter, a main emphasis of my work was the concept of public space and what effect this has on the viewer. I believe the study of this area contributed a new layer to my thesis, expanding the form of stage design to include public art, by questioning the role of the audience.

As part of analysing the data, post-performance, I took note of the audiences' feedback to identify what common concepts had arisen. From this, I deciphered elements of tension, danger and sympathy, which derived from the performer's struggle and performance atmosphere. I believe the reactions of the audience were the biggest unknown element of this project. Reflecting upon it now, I was happy and surprised at the mixture of emotions that were described. Many reactions were unplanned but were significant in contributing to the results of my thesis findings. I was able to correlate the results of the audience with the methods I had chosen. In this regard, I discovered

concepts of post-humanism and the reduction of the performer through its combination with the object.

In Chapter two, I delved into the theory of the sublime, explaining its roots, experience and the affect this has on the viewer. Exploring the theory, involved illustrating the different adaptations it gained throughout history, including art movements and the philosophy that surrounded it. I was aware of these theories of the sublime before this project, but the examination of this subject contributed greatly to the formation of my personal theory. Analysing the chosen areas of this theory assisted me in clarifying my own intentions for the thesis. I could recognise that the reaction of fear in *Sublime Humility* was similar to Burke's account of self-preservation. I also illustrated my inspiration of the Mathematical and Dynamical Sublime by demonstrating its influence upon the Objects Legs. Burke and Kant's definitions of the sublime were used as a basis for further investigation. I later portrayed changes throughout the movements that were affected by philosophical ideas, technology developments and societal changes. I briefly discussed features of the Romanticism art movement and the Industrial Sublime, to portray their impressions on my work. Although I recognise their limited impact on my artistic production, I now identify their importance within the history of the sublime through their concern of nature and man-made structures. In the discussion around the Contemporary Sublime, I referenced Edward Burtynsky, whose work embodies a balance of fear and amazement through human impact on a global scale. I selected this work as it epitomises the overwhelming impression of scale and the complexity of artistically representing the sublime. Because artworks have defined limits, it was argued that we could not find them physically threatening. However, I utilised Burtynsky's work to portray the overwhelming mental activity that artworks can cause. Overall, many writers, philosophers and artists have proposed different interpretations of the sublime theory. These interpretations differ but embody the idea of a limitless object, which is beyond our understanding and sensible cognition. I believe it can be further defined as a decentralisation of the individual's perspective, through a realisation of their slight significance in the presence of something greater.

Continuing from the discussion on the sublime, I expanded upon the concept of scale, revealing the potential of a 'Large Object'. Focused upon public artworks and performance, I referenced statues, sculptures, stilts and puppets, to depict this potential. I chose these case studies as they were most notable for their size and can demonstrate the power of a Large Object. The consideration of these art forms helped me understand the history that preceded my artistic project and demonstrated the impact of a 'Large Object.' Overall, these studies contributed to my thesis and from this, I could elaborate upon the role of body extension within my personal theory.

Within Chapter three, the dialogue around the body focused upon its corporality, functionality and human-animal hybrids. When reflecting upon my previous artistic practice, I was able to identify a reoccurring interest with dysfunctional bodies. The study of human-animal hybrids and folklore creatures were used as an example to validate my design decisions for this project. The method, 'to anthropomorphize', was recognised as an important tool in this thesis. The information from these deliberations supported my thesis questions concerning the extension of the body and dissolving of the ego.

When discussing disability, I practised ethical reflection to analyse the subject, theories and artistic case study. Normally categorised in terms of medical or biological defects, I referenced Minich, who aimed to expand the theory by defining disability by the social norms that surround it. I evaluated the performance work of Lisa Bufano, by referencing Amanda Cachia to analyse how contemporary disabled artists have utilised their bodies and what reactions this caused within the viewer. Bufano's idea of attraction/repulsion was related to the feeling of pleasure/displeasure in the experience of the sublime. I chose Bufano's performance work as it embodies the concepts that I was considering in my own work and it provided an alternative perspective to this thesis, by understanding the influence of dysfunctional bodies on stage. Her work connected the subjects of disability, beauty and animal, which caused conflicted feelings within the audience.

Further into chapter three, I introduced humility as a concept in philosophy, referencing two pieces of writing to provide insight into the subject. The diverse viewpoints of Battaly's research focused upon accepting one's limitations, which involved an awareness of them. Her work also pointed out the paradox within humility, as a belief that it is self-defeating. When starting this thesis, I had limited knowledge of the subject, humility, but I consider Battaly's paper to be a good oversight of the subject. The analysis of her work contributed honest accounts of humility, which I felt established a solid base for further discussion. Damon and Colby testified the importance of humility, by providing studies of their chosen moral leaders. This study portrayed the leaders as having low self-focus, turning their attention towards greater ambitions within their passions for human welfare and peace. As the goal of this thesis was to describe the benefits of the sublime experience and therefore, humility, it was important to establish these particular points. Overall, this investigation provided useful insight into the role of humility, which helped convey its potential benefits to the reader.

Thesis Findings and Personal Theory

In the thesis introduction, I provided two thesis questions. Throughout the three chapters of this thesis, I have discussed my chosen subjects to answer these questions, which informed my personal theory. I provide definitive answers to each question below, which presents my personal theory. My personal theory is the belief that the experience of the sublime can produce a feeling of humility, which can benefit us, as individuals.

1. How could the sublime teach us humility?

To experience the sublime is to encounter the presence of something that is physically or mentally greater than us, as individuals. This experience of the sublime causes the viewer to feel physically small, in comparison to such large objects, and mentally overwhelmed, as we struggle to comprehend the forces at play. I believe this encounter with the sublime, produces a feeling of humility through a sense of respect that is given to these outer forces. The quality of humility is a freedom from understanding the incomprehensible and transcendent nature of the sublime. Humility can be defined as an accurate assessment of one's abilities, which enables an acceptance of their place in the world. I believe that we can strive towards humility as an ideal, because it can benefit individuals, through more personal satisfaction, and help those around, through an appreciation of their contribution to the world.

The answer to this thesis question explains my personal theory and the potential of the sublime experience. *Sublime Humility*, the performance, was derived from this theory and was my personal manifestation of a sublime experience through artistic means. This was presented through body extensions, using the decentralisation of the human perspective as a method to dissolve the ego and thus impart humility to the audience. This is explained through the answer of my second thesis question.

2. What happens when you extend the body and dissolve the ego?

The extension of a body can take many forms, such as human, animal or fictitious bodies and can function through artistic forms, including stilts, puppets or props. The extension of a body is used as a method to challenge the audiences' definition of a functional body, by provoking fear and beauty through alternative manifestations of the body. The intention of dissolving the ego is a decentralisation of the human orientated perspective, similar to concepts of Posthumanism. This method works by detracting attention away from the performer and onto the object. In this scenario, the performer is reduced to body and movement as the focus can be the visual

appreciation of the body and object. This proposes performance work that focuses more upon the artistic forms of object and material. In summary, artistic works that utilise the sublime experience and dysfunctional body can cause conflicted feelings within the audience between pleasure, as a life affirming act, and displeasure, by acknowledging our inadequacy in perceiving the object.

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Photographs and Images

Fig. 1. 'Sublime Humility, Object Legs 1', 2020, Photograph credit Oona Koirala.

Fig. 2. 'Sublime Humility, Object Legs 2', 2020, Photograph credit to Oona Koirala.

Fig. 3. 'Sublime Humility, Object Legs 3', 2020, Photograph credit to Oona Koirala.

Fig. 4. 'Sublime Humility, Performance Viewing', 2020, Photographs credit Oona Koirala.
Collage credit to Oscar Dempsey, 2020.

Fig. 5. 'Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, 1818, by Caspar David Friedrich'. *Are.na*, 2020, Image credit to Carsten Goertz, <<https://www.are.na/block/5727385>>, (accessed 14.4.20).

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Fig. 8. 'Burning Man, Metropolis', *Behance*, 2010, Photograph credit to Hector Santizo, <<https://www.behance.net/gallery/750371/Burning-Man-2010>>, (accessed 26.9.19).

Fig. 9. 'The Sultans Elephant', *Wikipedia*, 2020, Photograph Credit to G2016, CC BY-SA 4.0, <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46678873>>, (accessed 9.4.20).

Fig. 10. 'Sublime Humility, Object Legs 1', 2020, Photograph credit to Oscar Dempsey.
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Fig. 11. 'Sublime Humility, Object Legs 3', 2020, Photograph credit Oona Koirala.
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Fig. 12. 'Lisa Bufano and Sonsheree Giles perform at YBCA', *Flickr*, 2012, Photograph Credit to Audrey Penven, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/audreypenven/7994931220/in/photostream/>>, (accessed 17.04.20).

Appendices

Appendix. 1. Dempsey, Oscar. *Sublime Humility Performance Feedback Form*, 2020.

Appendix 1.

MA Thesis Production, *Sublime Humility*, January 2020

Performance Feedback

How did the scale (size) of the works affect your experience?

- I felt small, yet inspired.
- I felt very aware and weird in my own body.
- The emotions arose from scale and the effort required for movement.
- Definitely made me sort of uncomfortable, weird.

What did you experience while watching this?

- Warmth and joy.
- It was surprising, weird and wonderful! Takes my mind to animal cruelty also...
- Sinking as the experience, the space fitted really well, [and the] audience as part of creating the performance (passers-by) sound scape was supporting, meditation, lovely calmness.
- Unease, weirdness, curiosity of craft (how costumes [were made]) and sound made by the first costume added work really extra secure, experience. Sound of costume is important. I loved how it worked.
- Yes in my leg and mind. Immense wearable interactive scenography technology. Contacting Sublime experience.
- There was a lot of tension in the atmosphere, feeling that the performers were struggling while trying to move.
- Wonderful drama involving a lot of tension. Super Design.

What did you think of the combination of performer and objects?

- Perfect meditation! Thank you!
- Warmth, endearment, being, amusement.
- Unique, new, generates ideas.

- Super associative performance- it took me/my mind to nature document [ary] to being a miniature insect in a jungle to images of post-war! Food for surreal imagination! Well done, thanks.
- Works well, beautiful, they came one.
- Works well, visually the third costume wasn't so interesting than others, even [though] its sound was interesting.
- They worked so well with each other. The performers and objects were two separate things, but suddenly melted into a whole new being.
- The movement was really interesting, how it required a lot of effort, but was still delicate, almost walking on tiptoes. Very inspiring, thank you!